



Foundation 3

COMMUNITY

Introduction



Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul”.

Acts 4:32

As seen in the life and ministry of Jesus, the disciples are called to live and grow within a community. It is from this living communion of faith that they are sent into the wider world, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ through their words and deeds.

Disciplineship and community are inextricably connected for while discipleship of the Lord begins and continues with a personal and intimate encounter with Him, it is never individualistic or private. Accordingly, our Catholic faith places a strong emphasis on communion in worship, beliefs and Christian action, on the communion of saints that is the Church on earth and in heaven, and on the spiritual, human, pastoral and intellectual benefits of doing things together.

The importance of community for our human flourishing and spiritual life is unmistakable. We all have a basic human need for community and it is essential for every other good – for our personal relationships and families, for the care of our health and the vulnerable, for education in truth, formation in morality, and for the transmission and integral development of life itself.

“In His ministry, Jesus expresses His desire and concern for the unity of human society”.



Parable of Lazarus, Vybor Bronnikov

What is more, many people in today’s world crave community. From mothers of young children to seniors, from teenagers and families to new migrants, from people of faith to those who profess no belief at all, we all desire and seek out a sense of belonging and solidarity with others. The isolation and social disconnection many have experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions have only intensified this deep longing.

In His ministry, Jesus expresses His desire and concern for the unity of human society. In His farewell discourse He prays “that [we] may all be one” (John 17:21). The common life for which Jesus prays here is not merely a collection of individuals but **a true communion marked by charity**: “[b]y this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

In Christ as one body, the disciples are called by Jesus to be united as agents of justice and reconciliation, in communion with one another as witnesses of healing and hope, and of one mind and heart as preachers of God’s mercy and love in the midst of a scattered and divided world. In this, the Church is called to reflect the life of the Trinity as a communion of persons, to be the home of those who believe in Jesus Christ, but also a witness to the source of the unity of the entire human family.

This witness to a communion of persons includes the **‘domestic church’**, our families, which are more important than ever before as a home of faith. As Pope Francis describes, the parish is a ‘family of families’ and the renewal of family life is a precious gift for the Church in our time and for society as a whole.¹ The parish is also a **‘community of communities’**, gifted with various groups of belonging shaped by ethnicity, culture, spirituality, needs and capacities. Each is to be encouraged and enabled to contribute their particular gifts to the vitality of the parish as a whole.²

¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* 202.
² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28.

When we experience the joy of being in Christ together as a parish, migrant chaplaincy or Eucharistic community, it deepens our spiritual commitment to evangelisation, to sharing that joy of belonging in Christ with others. **Community can draw people into the journey of discipleship** when they experience meaningful relationships in which they are known and loved, and they can be inspired to ‘go out’ to share this joy of belonging in Christ with their neighbour.

Community, then, is central to the gift of discipleship and the responsibility of evangelisation. It encourages us to deepen the experience of communion for those who belong to the parish, as well as those who do not yet know that their home is with us.

Parishes as Communities for Mission

As local communities gathered around God’s Word and the Eucharist, parishes are privileged locations of grace and central to the missionary life of our Archdiocese.

Our parishes are not merely venues for the reception of spiritual goods, but are living communities that nourish us to holiness and challenge us beyond a privatised or inward-looking faith. They are centres of encounter with Jesus Christ through the sacraments, prayer, catechesis, pastoral care, Christian outreach and many other experiences that build up the Church’s life and take the Good News of Jesus into the wider community. We know that a sure sign of a healthy community is that we want others to become a part of our communion and other people want to become a part of us, experiencing our parishes as places of welcome and growth.

In relation to the renewal of our parishes, Pope Francis has proclaimed, “[t]he parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelises, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be ‘the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters’”.³

³ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 28.

As we experience change in the way people live, work and worship in Sydney, we must call upon and cooperate with the Holy Spirit as the agent of authentic renewal in our parishes. As communities of the baptised, **our parishes are enriched by different charisms** given by the Spirit that renew and build up the Church. These gifts are given not for ‘safekeeping’ but to be channelled into an evangelising mission that ensures the community reaches out to others with creativity and boldness.

As we aspire to widen our outreach, we are called to **re-envision the borders of our communities** not as spaces where identities and relationships end, but rather as spaces where we can continue to grow through encounter and outreach with one another. We are being called to build up local communities of care where our parishes and schools, early childhood centres, aged care facilities and other centres of pastoral life work together to make disciples and advance the Kingdom of God in our midst. We are also called to recognise and respond to new mission territories, such as the ‘digital continent’ where many people experience relationship and community, seek out groups of belonging, search for answers to their questions, and are waiting to encounter Jesus Christ.



Strengthening the Foundation of Community

Our conscious decision to place the Great Commission at the centre of our identity and action in Sydney means discerning and enacting new ways to strengthen our parishes as flourishing Eucharistic communities, making disciples, and inviting others to enter into this way of life. Such a commitment should be reflected in the priorities and actions of our communities.

There are many **qualities that characterise the communities Jesus is calling us to be**. Among these are a shared vision or purpose in the Gospel, a strong sense of trust, belonging and interpersonal relationship within the community, forgiveness, communication, shared values, projects and lives, the contribution of different gifts, as well as openness to others including newcomers. Parishes are encouraged to strengthen community by taking steps to grow in these qualities for they are essential to their life and mission.

Below is a four (4) step process which your parish or chaplaincy may choose to undertake to **reflect** upon the place of community in the life and mission of Jesus, **review** how the importance of community expresses itself in your priorities and activities, **discern and decide** how God might be calling your community to deepen and grow, and take particular **actions** with the help of the support and resources outlined in this Mission Plan.

This four step process can be led by the parish priest with his parish leadership team or through attending a *Parishes for Mission* day offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation. These days will provide leaders with formation in mission, strategies to assess and strengthen foundations for mission, and practical ways to create and implement a vision for the community. For more details, visit www.gomakedisciples.org.au or contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org.

“...our identity and action in Sydney means discerning and enacting new ways to strengthen our parishes as flourishing Eucharistic communities, making disciples, and inviting others to enter into this way of life”.



Flevit super illam,
Enrique Simonet, 1892

Step 1: Reflect on Community in Jesus' Life and Mission

1.1 Begin with a reflection on the place and nature of community in the evangelising ministry of Jesus and in the mission of the early Church:

- “I pray for them; I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they belong to you: all I have is yours and all you have is mine, and in them I am glorified... I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me” (John 17:9-10, 20-23).
- “The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed. They went as a body to the Temple every day but met in their houses for the breaking of the bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved” (Acts 2:44-47).

- “Be at peace among yourselves. And this is what we ask you to do, brothers; warn the idlers, give courage to those who are apprehensive, care for the weak and be patient with everyone. Make sure that people do not try to take revenge; you must all think of what is best for each other and for the community. Be happy at all times; pray constantly and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:14-18).
- “Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is faithful. Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. Do not stay away from the meetings of the community, as some do, but encourage each other to go; the more so as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:23-25).

The following questions may help you reflect:

- a. What struck you in these readings?
- b. Which aspects of these communities would encourage you in your discipleship?
- c. What qualities of community do you notice in these readings?
- d. Are there qualities that you hope could grow in your own community?

1.2 In addition to this, it can be helpful for individuals to then reflect upon their own personal experience of parish community. This can be a personal exercise, undertaken in quiet prayer, which can be fruitful for the parish priest, the Parish Pastoral Council, ministry leaders and parishioners. Questions that might assist this prayer and reflection include:

- a. Do I know the parishioners with whom I form this community? Do I know their names, background and stories? Do I know anything about their lives, their joys and sorrows?
- b. Is it easy to speak to other parishioners about my experience of Jesus and faith, or request prayers for my concerns?
- c. Would I consider any parishioners to be my friends, and do I feel that I have a place in the parish community and a genuine contribution to make?



Step 2: **Review Community Life**

2.1 As communities, we can review the state of our efforts in building up a quality of communal life that fosters discipleship and dedicates itself to evangelisation, what is working well and what needs some attention. In the same way as for other foundations of parish renewal, a way of assessing the quality of community life is to conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis (or ‘SWOT’). Again, this exercise can be completed by your parish team, Parish Pastoral Council, a hospitality or welcome team or ministry groups in your community to reflect on the potential for the growth of community in your local context.

Once completed, the resulting information will help your parish or group to identify areas for response and enable it to choose practical actions to grow as a community.

This tool is designed to get the conversation started in your local community and can also be applied to the other priorities of disciple-making – evangelisation, leadership, formation, and worship.



Once this brainstorming has taken place, and a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to evangelisation is recorded, it is then possible to identify specific areas within each for response. No parish can be expected to address all these areas of concern at once. The following questions will assist your parish or community to focus on practical areas where it can best begin to renew its efforts to strengthen community life:

- a. What current strength in community can our parish, chaplaincy or movement most easily build upon?
- b. What current weakness in community would be the easiest one to fix?
- c. What is the greatest opportunity in community we could seize upon with the least amount of time and resources?
- d. What is the most immediate or greatest threat we need to address for the life of our community to grow and be renewed?

2.2 Parishes can also engage a tool called the ‘Membership Engagement Survey’ from Gallup. This survey measures the engagement of parishioners, understood as the degree of belonging each member has in his or her local faith community. This engagement impacts upon the level of ownership parishioners have for their mission and ministries, their willingness to invite others to participate in parish life, their experience of spiritual growth, and their service within and financial giving to the local community. Engagement and belonging are the soil upon which spiritual fruit in the parish is borne.

While this survey is not inexpensive, it has been used by growing Catholic parishes and communities to understand their people’s spiritual and practical engagement with community life, and to plan more effectively to bring about renewal and accomplish their vision.



Step 2: (continued)

Review Community Life

Resources

- The ‘Membership Engagement Survey’ from Gallup can be accessed online at www.gallup.com/products/174866/faith-member-engagement.aspx

2.3 Another practical way in which your parish can review its mission is to know those in the local community, beyond regular Sunday worshippers.

In seeking to reach out intentionally to people outside the Church, the parish can consider those who form the ‘mission field’ for the community. Have a conversation with your leadership team to identify who is in your region, their needs and who your community should be focused on reaching. You might consider the demographic information and local trends that are shaping your community, the age and spiritual background of those you are seeking to reach, their current life stage, and the key questions they are asking. You can then intentionally shape your parish strategies of invitation, welcome, enquiry, community and formation with this group in mind.

Resources

- The parish can access social data on the community (e.g. parish profiles available from the National Centre for Pastoral Research at <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au>) and also draw on local experience and knowledge. These sources of information can assist your parish to identify opportunities for outreach that reflect the demography and needs of the community, as well as to enhance initiatives of evangelisation and community-building already in action.



The Wedding Feast at Cana,
Paolo Veronese, 1563

Step 3: Discern and Decide

- 3.1 Steps 1 and 2 have given a strong sense of the place of community in the life of the disciple, and also the strengths and weakness in your own community life. The next step is to discern and decide how God might be calling your parish, chaplaincy or movement to strengthen its community.
- 3.2 The priest can lead his parish or leadership team through a process of prayerfully listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as received through reflection on the Gospel, through personal and communal prayer, and as emerge from the circumstances of the parish. Resources for a process of group discernment are available at www.gomakedisciples.org.au. Alternatively, priests seeking to strengthen their parish's foundations for mission are also welcome to engage in this process by attending a *Parishes for Mission* day and bringing their parish leaders with them. These days will be offered regionally and online by the Parish Renewal Team. For more details, contact the team at (02) 9390 5330 or email parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org.
- 3.3 As part of your discernment, consider the list of strategies below to strengthen the foundation of community and actions to implement each strategy. You are encouraged to choose those actions that allow you to best respond to your local circumstances, with relevant support and resources also listed to assist implementation.

Again, your parish or community may already be doing many of the good things outlined below. However, there will also be actions that your community can take up to further build up the life of your parish and invite others into community.

Strategy 1:

Get to Know the Parishioners

Action 1

Each parish should **develop a census for the whole parish** to ensure it has up-to-date information about parishioners in order to support planning for pastoral care and outreach, and to engage them with opportunities for evangelisation and formation.

Resources

- Undertake a parish census. You can find a basic census tool at www.gomakedisciples.org.au
- Undertake a National Church Life Survey in your parish to evaluate the culture within your parish by surveying those attending Mass over a given weekend. The data is analysed and can be used to identify areas of strength and need for growth. For more information and an outline of costs involved, visit www.ncls.org.au/planning/church-life-survey

Action 2

Review the Social Profile of your parish with data collated from the Australian Census, which takes place every five years. The data reported in these profiles reflect responses of people within the parish boundaries who identified themselves as Catholic in the Census. This data can provide insight into the demographic characteristics of a parish community.

Resources

- For more information, contact NCPR at ncpr@catholic.org.au or (02) 6201 9812 or visit the website www.ncpr.catholic.org.au/2016-parish-social-profiles/sydney



A family participating in the blessing of their car at St Christopher's Parish, Holsworthy

Strategy 2:

Share Lives and Faith

Action 1

The parish can seek to build bonds between new and existing members by organising **whole of community events** such as feast day celebrations, parish picnics, and family and school holiday activities.

Action 2

With appropriate permissions, each parish could develop strategies to **acknowledge significant milestones and anniversaries** amongst its members (e.g. baptisms, confirmations, marriages, anniversaries of death) to sustain connections and build communion in parish life.

Action 3

The parish can foster meaningful connections between parishioners by **facilitating a range of small groups**, with the importance of small groups explained and promoted, and leaders called forth and equipped for these gatherings.

A great place to start a small group culture in your parish, and receive training and support to run it successfully, is the Alpha program. The Parish Renewal Team has a full-time Alpha Parish Development Coordinator to support you to establish and run an Alpha group. The principles you learn to run this group can then be applied to other small groups in the parish. Often those who attend Alpha continue to be involved or lead other groups, as part of a discipleship pathway, and there are many good programs or approaches mentioned below which can be engaged.

Whether through participating in Alpha, Lenten or Advent groups, family or youth groups, or forming groups focused on Scripture, a Church document or book, people value opportunities to share their lives, learnings and the ways in which Christ is working in them through the Holy Spirit. Small groups open opportunities for shared meals, prayer, and time for fellowship and spiritual testimony.

Those who approach the parish for the Sacraments of Initiation or Marriage could also be invited to participate in a small group of prayer, learning or service.

Resources

- The Alpha series can be used as a resource to introduce and foster community through small groups. For assistance, contact Tania Rimac on tania.rimac@sydneycatholic.org or on (02) 9390 5338

Action 3

- Staff within the Parish Renewal Team are available to help you identify the best resources for your parish groups and support you in establishing a group. The Parish Renewal Team can also help train leaders to facilitate small groups effectively. For assistance, contact the team at parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5330
- The Diocese of Wollongong has produced a helpful format for small groups through its 'Faith Circles' initiative. See www.dow.org.au/media-resources/faith-circles for more details and to download materials
- Franciscan University, Steubenville has a helpful guidebook and resources on 'Discipleship Quads' at www.steubenvilleconferences.com/discipleship-quads
- Small groups can use a range of different resources that assist their people to enter more deeply into the experience of discipleship, the understanding of faith and the joy of Christian community. These resources include programs on Scripture such as 'The Bible Timeline' (www.ascensionpress.com/collections/the-bible-timeline-the-story-of-salvation) and various programs on the Catholic tradition, the Mass, discipleship, and evangelisation from Word on Fire (www.wordonfire.org)
- The 'Called and Gifted' program can help people discern what their charisms are and how they can be used to serve the community in the mission of the Church. Workshops are available. For more information, go to www.siena.org

Action 4

Some parishes have developed social and spiritual connections between families and individuals in parishes by **establishing family groups**.

Resources

- The Passionist Family Group Movement aims to build Christian community through the development of extended families between members of the parish. The family group can provide an extended family for all who wish to belong – married, single or divorced, young, older and so on. For more information, visit www.pfgm.org or email family@pfgm.org or phone Annette and Tony Guterres on 0412 759 912

Action 4

- Schoenstatt Family Groups regularly develop seminars, retreats, and different conferences with subjects related to education and marriage. During these events, time is also devoted to strengthening and cultivating family relationships. For more information, contact Sr. M Elizabeth Foley ISSM at Schoenstatt Mulgoa on (02) 4773 8338 or Steven Buhagiar, Life Marriage and Family team, in the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation at steven.buhagiar@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 3:

Offer a Welcoming Liturgy

Action 1

During liturgy, the priest can extend hospitality by **welcoming visitors and guests**, introducing himself and any other priests, deacons, and servers, explaining the parts of the Mass when appropriate, communicating welcome and reassurance to those present, including parents of young children and children with special needs, inviting people for a blessing if they are unable to receive communion, and inviting people to hospitality and small groups available within the parish.

Action 2

Parishes might provide **projected or printed versions of the Order of Mass** and hymns at liturgies to encourage and support unity and active participation in worship, while also encouraging people to learn the Ordinary of the Mass.

Strategy 4:

Identify and Follow-up Newcomers

Action 1

Each parish can develop strategies to **identify newcomers to parish life and ministry groups and invite registration**. Welcomers and parishioners might be encouraged to look out for new faces at Masses and parish events, to introduce themselves and invite registration; there might be occasional invitations at Mass from priests or parishioners, inviting newcomers to register and to get to know their clergy and fellow parishioners; 'new parishioner' registration cards can be available at events and any new names submitted to the parish office and/or welcome coordinators.

Strategy 4 (continued):

Identify and Follow-up Newcomers

Parishes can develop and review on an ongoing basis **'follow-up' processes** within the parish to keep newcomers connected to parish life.

This could include a monthly or quarterly 'newcomer Sunday gathering' or 'welcome coffee hour' following Mass (facilitated by a welcome coordinator or parish hospitality team) or parish BBQ to foster integration and ongoing participation in parish life.

Consider personal outreach, or a letter from the parish priest or welcome coordinators, in days following registration and provision of welcome packs if not already received; a roster of welcomers to visit new parishioners in their homes with parish packs and other information and resources for faith; periodic letters or social media from parish group leaders inviting the involvement of newcomers in ministries and activities of the parish (e.g. as catechists) and in parish groups; a visit from parish clergy. A review of the personal information collection notice included in parish registration may be required to permit ongoing correspondence between the parish and its members about events, programs and initiatives on offer.

Strategy 5:

Create Welcoming Resources

Parishes can assemble and periodically update parish **welcome packs or kits** providing information related to the parish and parish staff, details of Mass times, Confession and regular devotions, parish prayer cards and other Catholic prayers, ministry group and pastoral care contact numbers, parish registration cards, a census form or similar to encourage belonging, and invitational cards to call forth expressions of interest in ministry or groups of the parish. Parishes can make **welcome packs** available at significant evangelising moments including parish Masses, sacramental programs, Alpha, RCIA, youth gatherings and events, baptisms, marriages and funerals, Christmas and Easter Masses.

Resources

- Go to www.gomakedisciples.org.au for a sample welcome pack which can be adapted to your parish

Strategy 6:

Welcome People

Action 1

Parishes might form a **welcome and hospitality team** and appoint welcome coordinators, ensuring there are trained welcomers (volunteers) for Masses, with a presence at church entrances and exits, to welcome and greet all parishioners on arrival, provide material related to the liturgy and parish life, identify newcomers and potentially gather their details when practicable.

Resources

- Listen to *The Rebuilt Parish Podcast* episodes 19-21: Creating a Culture of Hospitality at <https://rebuiltparish.podbean.com/page/3>

Action 2

Parishes can provide **welcome initiatives after parish Masses** to ensure newcomers and others experience hospitality throughout the length of their visit (e.g. tea, coffee, an invitation to connect with key leaders to learn how to take the next steps in their spiritual growth).

Action 3

Parish teams together with welcome coordinators and teams can **ensure welcome efforts and initiatives are re-energised** and especially focused in weeks leading up to Easter and Christmas for all those who return to church at these times (e.g. promotion of times of Masses, Confession and carol events through schools, local press, letter box drops and mail outs). These initiatives can be undertaken in collaboration with neighbouring or partnering parishes, making known all options available during these seasons.

An essential part of welcoming people is inviting them to experience a deeper belonging to the parish community and an opportunity to a renewed encounter with Jesus. Key calendar events such as Easter and Christmas are an ideal opportunity to do this.



Strategy 7:

Build Community Through a Common Commitment to Justice

Communities are strengthened by sharing a common purpose, and life-giving communities look outwards. **The desire to work for social justice can build community** and also reinforce the social implications of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Resources

- For the many ways in which your parish can work as a community on issues of justice including housing affordability, care of creation, justice for asylum seekers and refugees, inclusion of people in our communities who are living with disability, and working conditions for poorer workers, visit the Archdiocese of Sydney's Justice and Peace Office via www.justiceandpeace.org.au or contact the team on (02) 9307 8465 or jpoinfo@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 8:

Welcome and Support Migrants and Refugees

Each parish, with the advice of migrant chaplaincies, can engage parishioners who may be able to assist with **translation** and/or the **integration of migrants and refugees into community life**, whether that be in the school, parish or in the wider community.

Resources

- For support and more information, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923

Parishes might develop an **annual multicultural or international Mass** in the parish, encouraging the sharing of traditions and different languages in liturgy, followed by a light supper or similar (e.g. on Pentecost Sunday or Migrant & Refugee Sunday)

Resources

- For assistance with translations or integration of traditions and languages, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923

Action 1

Action 2

Strategy 8 (continued):

Welcome and Support Migrants and Refugees

Parishes should reflect on other **ways in which the cultural and faith traditions of migrant families can enrich the parish community** and its life (for example, attention given to feast days significant to migrant communities, recalling the faithful witness of all the nations, participation in festivals or devotions particular to those communities, creating opportunities for storytelling).

Resources

- For support, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923

Celebrate the **World Day of Migrants and Refugees**, a day established by the Holy See.

Resources

- Every year, the Archdiocese of Sydney celebrates the Archdiocesan Multicultural Mass at St Mary's Cathedral which gives thanks to God for the gift of the many cultural groups that enrich our nation and our Church. For further information, contact the Catholic Immigration Office on immigration@sydneycatholic.org or (02) 9390 5923
- The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office provides a helpful resource kit for parish and other community gatherings, available at www.acmro.catholic.org.au
- The Holy See's Office for Migrants and Refugees also provides a range of resources including a kit for the celebration of this day, available at www.migrants-refugees.va/resource-center/world-day-of-migrants-refugees-2020

Action 3

Action 4



Strategy 9:

Welcome and Support the Elderly

Action 1

Parishes should review and strengthen parish hospitality to aged Catholics, especially the **provision of transport services** to and from liturgies and events in parish and diocesan life.

Action 2

Each parish can review the strength and effectiveness of **pastoral support and care for the aged**, including those in private, nursing and retirement homes, and other facilities. Special consideration should be given to the access of the aged and infirm to the sacraments and Christian companionship.

Resources

- CatholicCare is leading a project to care for the elderly through a broad-based Seniors Ministry. This ministry would create a community of care in parishes that assists people to plan for their progress through older age, provide compassionate support for people and their families and friends through to the end of life, seek to treat people as they get older with the dignity that they deserve, to overcome the loneliness that can emerge as they get older and facilitate people staying connected with community and to enable them to age and die in a state of grace. Parishes can access the Seniors Ministry by contacting Cathy Hammond on 0427 960 918 or 13 18 19 or via email at cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org
- As a registered home care provider, CatholicCare is available to help parishioners through the 'My Aged Care' process, assisting them to access funds to help people remain living at home. CatholicCare provides services that parishioners can access as occasional, short-term or round-the-clock care from their professional, locally-based staff. From complete 'Home Care Packages' to a helping hand at home, CatholicCare can assist throughout the assessment process and tailor services to ensure they are meeting needs. For information about home care packages, visit www.catholiccare.org/senior-services. To arrange for a home care specialist to visit a parishioner's home, parishes can call 13 18 19. To book a presentation for more information, please contact Deborah Absalom on 13 18 19, 0438 494 518 or email deborah.absalom@catholiccare.org

Strategy 10:

Minister to the Homebound

Each parish can review the strength and effectiveness of **pastoral support to those who find it difficult or impossible to be part of community worship** and other gatherings. Every effort should be made to ensure those who are homebound, dislocated or isolated know that they are valued, loved and cared for by the local parish community.

Resources

- Parishes can work with CatholicCare to create a team of trained volunteer chaplain assistants, reaching out to prisoners and those post-prison, the homeless, the aged, the sick and the dying. To find out more, visit www.catholiccare.org/community-services/chaplaincy-services or contact Fr Peter Carroll MSC on 13 18 19 or via email peter.carroll@catholiccare.org

Strategy 11:

Care for Children and Families

Communities can **appoint and train Parish Safeguarding Support Officers (PSSO) or Chaplaincy Safeguarding Support Officers (CSSO)**. These safeguarding supports can be found in over 120 of our parishes and in over six of our chaplaincy communities. The Safeguarding Support Officers help support and assist the parish priest and migrant chaplains to meet their safeguarding obligations and missions within the parish community. Parishes and chaplaincies that have a Safeguarding Support Officer have found it easier to meet safeguarding compliance within their community.

Resources

- For further information regarding Safeguarding Support Officers, please contact the Safeguarding Office on (02) 9390 5811 or email safeguardingtraining@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 11 (continued):

Care for Children and Families

Parishes can access and use the following **resources developed by the Safeguarding Office** that help inform and educate the children, young people and communities of the Archdiocese about the different characteristics of safeguarding.

Resources

All the safeguarding resources below are available for free download via the Safeguarding Office page www.sydneycatholic.org/safeguarding-and-child-protection or call (02) 9390 5811

- The ‘Rights and Responsibilities’ charter, postcard and poster is for children and young people of the Archdiocese. It informs them about their rights within the Archdiocese as well as their responsibilities in ensuring their rights are upheld
- ‘The Caring Code Journey’ has been developed into a game format to help inform children aged between 5-12 years of age that for every action there is a reaction that could affect themselves as well as others around them. ‘The Caring Code Journey’ is a useful resource in helping children identify safe behaviours
- The ‘Someone Will Listen to You’ card has been designed specifically for children. This card helps children to identify three trusted adults with whom they can talk if they ever have any concerns or worries
- The ‘Listening to You’ card is a resource for adults within the Archdiocese to help direct them and advise them on how to raise any concerns or to provide feedback they may have with their parish priest
- ‘The Safeguarding Journey’ poster provides children and young people with information about how they can help build a safer environment for all children and young people, and an awareness of what child abuse is and of their right to be safe and how to seek help from a trusted adult. All children and young people have the right to be safe, to feel safe and to be respected
- The ‘Behaviour Code for Young People’ poster helps young people carry on the mission of Jesus within the Archdiocese of Sydney by informing the young people aged 13-17 years about the behaviour that is expected of them whilst participating within any ministry of the Archdiocese

Action 2

Parishes can support the commitment to safeguarding by engaging members of their community to complete the ‘**Safeguarding and Child Protection Induction Training**’. Induction training equips individuals with knowledge of safeguarding and child protection requirements as well as basic knowledge of what it means to be a proactive safeguarding parish.

Action 3

Action 3

Resources

- Safeguarding Induction training can be completed either online (register via this link <https://forms.gle/14hDdVDgJwCs9eyJ8>) or by a trained Parish Safeguarding Support Officer or trained Chaplaincy Safeguarding Support Officer. For more information about safeguarding training, contact the Safeguarding Office on (02) 9390 5811 or email safeguardingtraining@sydneycatholic.org

Action 4

CatholicCare offers **support and care to children and young people** including services relating to adoption and foster care, child disability services, and youth pregnancy and parenting support. To access further information, visit www.catholiccare.org/children-and-youth-services. For further information on foster care and adoption, visit www.familyspirit.org.

Action 5

CatholicCare supports parishes to **help families who are struggling**. CatholicCare offers advice and advocacy to families in navigating the social services landscape, and assisting them to find the help they need. To find out about the services CatholicCare offers, go to www.catholiccare.org/catholiccare-learn-more/sydney-parishes and www.catholiccare.org/family-and-individual-services or call 13 18 19.



Celebration after the Multicultural Mass

Strategy 12:

Care for the Suffering and Vulnerable

Parishes should offer (or collaborate with another to provide) a **grief or bereavement group** for all those in community who have experienced loss (including widows, widowers and those who have suffered miscarriage or neo-natal loss).

Resources

- CatholicCare Sydney in conjunction with Catholic Cemeteries is also available to assist parishes with grief and bereavement support through a 'Grief Care' service. They offer seminars and community formation, as well as a Grief Care newsletter. For more information, visit www.catholiccemeteries.com.au/grief-care. Counselling is also available by calling CCareline on 13 18 19
- MacKillop Family Services' 'Good Grief' program provides evidence-based change and loss education programs to support children, young people and adults to understand their experience and attend well to their grief. For more information, visit www.mackillop.org.au/institute/good-grief

Parishes can engage the support of CatholicCare in **the development of communities of care where collaboration is enhanced between the parish and charitable services** such as the St Vincent de Paul Society, aged care facilities, early childhood centres, primary and secondary schools, seniors' ministry and other forms of social support and outreach.

Resources

- Parishes can work with CatholicCare to create a 'community of care' via one or more of the following initiatives: Families Ministry, Seniors Ministry and/ or Social Housing. To find out more, contact Cathy Hammond on 0427 960 918, on 13 18 19 or via email cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org. For further information, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykCq--rXnBU&feature=youtu.be
- CatholicCare has launched a campaign to enable people in parishes to financially support services that address some of society's greatest challenges – homelessness, loneliness, addiction, disadvantage and crisis. To find out more about supporting these programs financially, visit www.curocareforchange.org.au or contact Thomas Ng on 0412 612 228, on 13 18 19 or via email at thomas.ng@catholiccare.org

Action 1

Action 2

Strategy 12 (continued):

Care for the Suffering and Vulnerable

- CatholicCare's Parish Volunteer Program was established as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With over 40 parishes and over 150 parish volunteers involved, the program provides practical and financial assistance to people in need during lockdown and beyond. By calling 13 18 19, anyone in the community can connect with local parish volunteers who can help with shopping, errands or a regular friendly chat over the phone. For your parish to get involved in this program, or to access financial support for parishioners affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, please contact Cathy Hammond on 0427 960 918, on 13 18 19 or via email cathy.hammond@catholiccare.org

Strategy 13:

Welcome and Support People with Disabilities and Special Needs

Parishes might review parish activities and facilities to ensure **access, welcome and resources for parishioners and visitors with disabilities or special needs** as integral members of our parish communities. For example, clear signage within and around churches and parish buildings, the accessibility of parish offices, sanctuaries, halls and meeting rooms, the availability of hearing loops within the church, the size of written texts used in the church to cater for the vision impaired, opportunities for ministry training and formation to enable full participation of all in parish life.

Resources

- The Archdiocese of Sydney's Justice and Peace Office offers formation on a range of justice issues. For formation in Catholic Social Teaching regarding members of our communities with disabilities and special needs, visit www.justiceandpeace.org.au or call (02) 9307 8465
- Helpful resources, including the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference's document *Celebrating the Sacramental Life from Birth to Death: Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with People with Disability*, are available online at www.catholic.org.au/csldb

- CatholicCare can assist parishioners with disabilities by providing NDIS support coordination, meaningful work opportunities, and educational programs to help build practical skills and qualifications. Parishes can support CatholicCare's CentaCare Industries by employing CentaCare workers for parish gardening, cleaning, packing, assembling and shredding. To find out more about CatholicCare's disability services, visit www.catholiccare.org/disability-services or call 13 18 19

Strategy 14:

Build Community for Youth

Engage and **work together with youth to build up a sense of belonging and welcome**, networking them with one another, in a culture of support, formation and service in the parish and beyond. Consider some of the following initiatives.

- Host regular events for young people, such as pizza or movie nights, worship nights or Adoration, where they can build and develop friendships together and share their experience of the Christian life
- Provide young people with responsibility for serving and building up the parish community by hosting various events such as BBQs or parish picnics, morning teas or movie nights and forms of missionary service

Resources

- The 'Youth Group Starter Kit', developed by Sydney Catholic Youth, was created for and is available to parish priests, migrant chaplains, ecclesial movement leaders, parish teams and youth leaders to establish youth ministry in their parish or faith community. This kit is available online at www.sydneycatholicyouth.org
- For support with building community for young people in your parish, to establish or develop a youth ministry, or help with any of the initiatives listed above, contact Sydney Catholic Youth at info@sydneycatholicyouth.org or on (02) 9307 8152

Strategy 15:

Build the Relationship between Parishes and Schools

Action 1

Host gatherings, such as a morning tea, for **students in Catholic Special Religious Education and their families**, and invite them to the parish youth group, retreats, formation opportunities or other gatherings in the life of the parish.

Resources

- For support in coordinating such events of outreach, contact your local Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Faith Education Officer or the CCD Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330

Action 2

Invite Special Religious Education Catechists to give their students a start-of-year letter, with a parish bulletin and an **invitation to Mass and sacramental preparation programs**, to take home to their parents/carers.

Resources

- Note that providing public school students with any printed material must be done in accordance with NSW Special Religious Education Procedures. For more information and support in this communication, contact the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330

Action 3

Inform your Special Religious Education Catechists about **events for youth in the region** and ask them to invite students from the public schools.

Resources

- Again, this must be done in accordance with NSW Special Religious Education Procedures. For more information and support in issuing such invitations, contact the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330



Strategy 15 (continued):

Build the Relationship between Parishes and Schools

Action 4

Invite **Catholic students in public schools to participate in sacramental preparation retreats** together with students of Catholic schools.

Resources

- For guidelines surrounding this, including permissions for students allowing them to be absent from school (should the retreat fall on a school day), contact your local Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Faith Education Officer or the CCD Parish Catechist Support office at office@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au or on (02) 9307 8330

Action 5

Students in public schools attending Catholic Special Religious Education can be invited to **join local Catholic schools** in their pilgrimages to World Youth Day, Australian Catholic Youth Festival and other national events.

Resources

- Contact Glen Thompson at Sydney Catholic Schools on (02) 9568 8140 or glen.thompson@syd.catholic.edu.au

Strategy 16:

Engage with the Wider Community

Action 1

Parishes can consider **events and opportunities in the wider community** in which the parish can express its faith to others (e.g. Relay for Life events, the St Vincent de Paul Society Winter Sleep-out, Clean Up Australia Day, local sporting events and community festivals and markets).

Strategy 16 (continued):

Engage With the Wider Community

Action 2

Consider running **workshops that serve the wider community** such as offering a homework centre, new migrant welcome centre, seniors' gathering place, workshops on fatherhood, motherhood and parenting, careers evenings for young people, or various mentoring programs.

Resources

- To discuss opportunities and relevant speakers and resources, please contact the Parish Renewal Team on (02) 9390 5330 or parishrenewal@sydneycatholic.org

Action 3

Consider having a **parish open day** or join together with the school to facilitate such a day together. Hospitality can be offered via a BBQ or coffee cart with information packs for visitors, opportunities for prayer, tours of the parish church and grounds, an introduction to an upcoming parish program or formation opportunity such as Alpha. Parishes can also engage the local community in this way by their creative and regular presence at local markets.

Action 4

Consider the needs of your wider community and what your parish could do to work toward the common good. While the needs of your local community may be unique, some examples of parish responses are listed below, drawn from the experience of growing Catholic communities.

Resources

- Communities with a high unemployment rate or social issues could offer mentoring or accompaniment by select parishioners who are able to offer relevant advice or practical support or connections
- Study programs or assistance can be offered for high school students or newly arrived adults in your parish. For example, English classes could be provided for those with a Language Background Other than English (LBOTE)
- Coordinated responses could be arranged with St Vincent de Paul Society conferences and other social needs or justice groups within the parish or deanery

Strategy 16 (continued):

Engage With the Wider Community

Action 5

Build a relationship with your Members of Parliament and local councillors by inviting them to events such as significant parish anniversaries, affirming the role of the parish in the life of the local community.

Action 6

Invite other religious leaders in your area to a morning tea hosted in your parish, to build relationships in the wider community and even collaborate toward common works and on common issues in the local community.

Strategy 17:

Create Accessible and Hospitable Environments

Action 1

Parishes should **review opening hours of the parish church** or churches taking into account the desire for prayer during the day and early evening (this may involve a review of security measures to enable longer hours of prayer within the life of the community).

Action 2

Mass, Confession and devotional times should be made prominent on parish bulletins, with these same details made visible on parish noticeboards and/or church signs, and on the parish website.

Action 3

Parishes might review and ensure **adequate and clear signage** throughout the parish grounds and facilities, to allow visitors and newcomers in particular to find their way to church buildings, parish halls, car parking, and amenities with ease.

Action 4

Parishes should ensure church grounds and facilities are **clean, tidy and easily accessible**. This ensures newcomers and existing parishioners feel welcome.

Strategy 18:

Fundraise for Community Needs

The Archdiocesan Development and Fundraising Office can help you to raise funds that could enhance initiatives to improve the experience of community in your parish such as the purchase of a mode of transport for parishioners who cannot drive, a coffee van for hospitality, or other items that could assist with parish welcome, hospitality and outreach.

Resources

- For more information regarding fundraising, please email fundraising@sydneycatholic.org or phone 1800 753 959

Strategy 19:

Improve Communications to Create Community

Parish welcome material, parish registration forms, and accurate and up-to-date parish information can be made **available online** via a parish website and through appropriate social media, with maintenance and periodic review of content by parish team members or nominated parishioners.

Resources

- The Communications team within the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation can provide support for your website and strategies for social media outreach. For more information, contact Michael Kenny on 0438 046 406 or cathcomm@sydneycatholic.org

Strategy 19 (continued):

Improve Communications to Create Community

Action 2

Parishes can **engage or improve their use of many new technologies that support communication** and so build community. These include livestreaming, WiFi, and other audio-visual and online communications tools.

Resources

- The Digital and Design team of the Sydney Centre for Evangelisation can provide assistance and guidance to parishes on livestreaming solutions, improving WiFi coverage, simple technical assistance, and best practice in audio-visual and online outreach. For assistance, contact Mike Lynch at mike.lynch@sydneycatholic.org or on 0413 000 330

Action 3

All tools that can support good communications aid the building of community. One simple tool is a **concise and personalised electronic newsletter** sent each week from the parish priest and providing material such as a brief spiritual reflection for the week ahead, a link to the Sunday readings, and an invitation to parishioners to various parish gatherings and spiritual formation. Engaging such digital tools keeps the parish and parishioners in touch during periods of absence, can be a blessing for the housebound, and makes parish communications more resilient during disruptive events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The parish bulletin could also be attached to such a newsletter if desired.

Resources

- The Sydney Centre for Evangelisation's Digital and Design team can provide Sydney parishes with assistance in setting up commonly used templates for electronic newsletters and provide, on request, training in their use. For more assistance, contact Peter Rodrigues at peter.rodrigues@sydneycatholic.org or on 0409 608 271



Canice's Kitchen Christmas lunch

Step 4: Act

In deciding and then taking these actions forward, the parish priest can work together with the Parish Pastoral Council or relevant ministry leaders to create action groups, sub-committees or a team for building community life, established for a definite duration. These groups should ideally include at least one member of the Parish Pastoral Council to ensure alignment with the wider vision and planning of the parish as a whole, and can lead and invite others into these efforts toward renewal.

You could also consider forming a senior leadership team that can focus upon assisting in the ongoing practical strategies and decisions needed to implement the plan, which allows the Parish Pastoral Council to focus on the longer term pastoral plan of the parish. Read more about the role of a senior leadership team in bringing the vision of the parish into reality in the chapter on Leadership.