

EPHING COMBINED RESPONSES FROM 3 PDNS DISCERNMENT GROUPS

Question 1.

- Being Church in a highly multicultural community presents a range of challenges. Expectations range from pre-Vatican II styles and the availability of many devotions through to post Vatican II and contemporary synodal ways of being Church.
- Anglo Celtic Australian members are now a minority within the community. Many carry the story of the struggle for Catholics to be fully accepted in wider society and deserving of government support for initiatives such as education and health care. They know that Catholics can be strong advocates for reform of Church.
- One consequence of the above point, is that some no longer feel that their faith is recognised by the directions of the current wider Catholic Church in Broken Bay. Some may still come to Mass out of a sense of duty while gradually becoming a decreasing presence.
- A strong sense of Catholic identity '*From our being in Christ Jesus comes our doing*', we aim to treat others and ourselves with dignity, respect and charity.
- Prayer and relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit is what prompts us to move out to people within and beyond the parish. Being who we are inspires connection to draw people into God's plan for us.
- Parish demographics have changed. There is an increase in young families
- Belief in ourselves as Spirit filled with the power of gathering people to build strong community relationships.

Question 2.

Parish demographics have and continue to change to now include younger families and university students. We are a privileged parish with the soon to be opened gift of wonderful new facilities. These new facilities represent a challenge for the parish to ensure that they are fruitful. Prayerful discernment and planning are needed. Some possibilities:

- Shared parish meals – lunch/dinner
- Coffee shop
- Parish library and resources
- Formation and education programs open to other parishes

- Our parish is a community of communities who are likely to generate a range of requests for using the new facilities. Welcome needs to be a priority.
- Provide use of the facilities to parishioners from diverse cultural backgrounds for significant family and cultural days/seasonal celebrations/
- Youth festivals for deanery clusters
- New parish facilities will offer many ways of welcoming and connecting young and old both socially and spiritually.
- Culturally inclusive prayer experiences focussed on hope, love and strength.
- Praise and worship that allows the Spirit to speak and encourages deep listening.
- Adoration and 24 hour worship.
- Fresh means of communication between the two parish communities, parish groups, individuals and neighbouring parishes.

Question 3.

Powerful shared experiences of migration and the difficulties encountered while trying to re-discover personal self-identity and negotiating a very different culture. Migration stories may be one of the great strengths of our parish.

- These experiences offered insights into what is needed for pastoral care and formation in the larger changing demographic of the North Shore and in individual parishes.
- Some of these experiences included pre-arranged employment that no longer existed during a time of recession; unrecognised academic qualifications; lack of available translations in a predominately monolingual culture; language difficulties; lack of a relational community.
- There is a need for ways to serve young migrants who often experience loneliness and need assistance with Government processes.
- Plan for and encourage cultural ways of sharing faith.
- Recognition of migrants who felt called to come to Australia to evangelise and mentor others, facilitating ways to help them to answer this call.

- Foster an intercultural community with interactions of people raised in different cultures, generations and faith perspectives, where deep connections are formed with mutual respect and learning from each other.

Encouraging the understanding that ‘multicultural’ describes a social reality and is sometimes explained as ‘existing together separately.’ It does not describe how people of one culture relate to people of another culture. Formation that moves people from understanding their parish communities as multicultural to becoming intercultural communities:

- Shared commitment to a common parish life motivated by shared faith and a shared mission;
- Celebrate shared faith and vocational commitment in the context of a community of diverse people who are committed to developing relationships of respectful interdependence, mutual respect, patience, mentoring, graciousness, diplomacy, compromise and dialogue;
- Open and appreciative new ways of living faith through culture;
- Appreciate that faith is lived culturally;
- Encourage all parishioners, (not only those who have migrated from various cultures) to accept the challenge of interculturality to move beyond their comfort zone;
- Move to a way of being a parish that is somewhat new and somewhat familiar for everyone;
- Formation for a ministry of listening drawing from Ignatian and Benedictine spirituality. Specific formation in Conversation in the Spirit.
- Formation of small group facilitators for a range of possible small groups.
- Formation in Scripture and establishment of continuing small groups using quality, contemporary resources. Focus of the groups may vary. For example: Lectio Divina, Ignatian contemplation and visualisation, study and reflection.
- Broad formation opportunities from the basics in faith through to deeper experiences that will assist people to live and grow in faith.
- Formation for teams of people to lead a variety of prayer and formation experiences.

Establishment of small groups to address expressed needs. For example:

- Groups who welcome whole families for prayer, socialising, sharing of experiences where all age group’s needs are met.

- Groups with a specific focus, such as new arrivals to the parish; recent migration experience; single women; English language skills; recently unemployed; financial planning and other discerned needs.
- Draw from the expertise of, for example, CatholicCare, Vinnies. Jesuit Refugee Services.

Question 4.

- Encouraging strength. It is hard for many people to live as Catholics given the current economic circumstances, lack of affordable housing and high unemployment. Especially for young people and families with young children.
- The pressures on family life in a very uncertain economic environment with escalating cost of housing means that both parents must work full time to provide for education, living and even modest housing. Exhaustion, lack of time for being together as a family is a struggle. A strong sense of 'not being able to do it all' can lead to unjustified feelings of failing and high anxiety.
- It is not possible for the many social and cultural shifts to be addressed by parishes. However, nurturing a strong spiritual life, especially for mid-life adults who, although they may not articulate it, are often seeking spiritual well-being that will positively influence all areas of their lives.
- Recognising their spiritual life, as different from but related to their devotional life, and talking about their spiritual needs can be difficult for some. The availability of spiritual directors to accompany those who are seeking to nurture their spiritual life can be helpful.
- Provide additional programs that support and nurture parishioners in the areas of Christian lifestyle and self-help, for example depression and anxiety.
- Parish may consider offering space in the new facilities to suitable external groups who offer a variety of community support programs. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous, the 'Twelve Step' programs of recovery)
- Pastoral Care that draws from appreciating mission as an expression of God's love.

Question 5.

(no responses)