

Our Journey so Far as We Walk Together into Being a New Way of Church

Last weekend, about 45 parishioners gathered at St Columba's hall for our parish visioning workshop. This event capped off five weeks of conversations we had in the pews during Lent. But let's rewind a bit...

In 2022, the newly formed parish Discernment Group met to discuss our responses to the Archdiocese's call for parishes to unite and form vibrant, vital and viable faith communities for the future. The Discernment Group created a 'parish roadmap' for a ten-year journey, which we invited neighbouring parishes to join, however, we ended up proceeding alone.

We introduced our draft roadmap and got feedback from parishioners at a Pentecost Eve workshop in 2023. In phase one, we interviewed the Parish Leadership and Development Team (PLDT) to identify key issues for the next decade. This resulted in two guiding or framing questions for our journey:

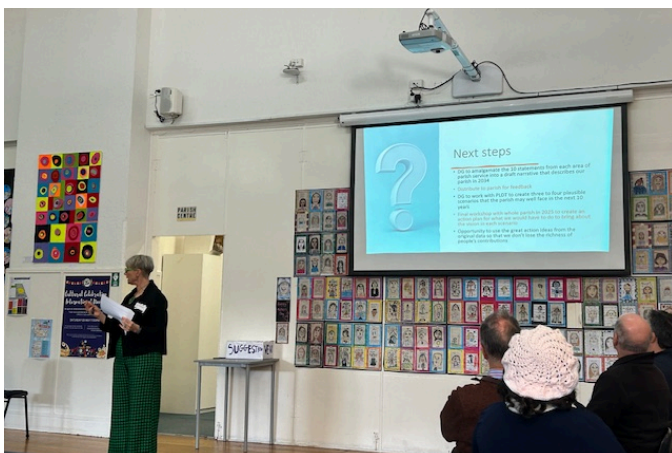
How can we work together to continue building a welcoming community of faith that draws people in and provides a sense of belonging?

How can we foster a deep spirituality that feeds our people and calls us in care and outreach to our community and our world?

A draft Issues Report along with these questions were shared with the parish for feedback. After validation, the Discernment Group identified five areas of parish service needing development if we were to address the framing questions:

- Worship and faith formation
- Welcome, hospitality, and belonging
- Leadership and governance
- Pastoral care
- Community outreach.

In Phase 2 during Lent 2024, we focused on one service area each week. Through small group discussions in the pews, we speculated on our ideal future parish by asking "What if...?" Hundreds of wonderful ideas were collected, summarised into themes and shared with the parish. These inspired our visioning workshop last weekend.



At the workshop, we split into groups to work on each service area and used the ideas collected from the parish in a guided visualisation to imagine worship at Sacred Heart/St Columba's on Pentecost Sunday 2034. We used an Ignatian technique called 'spiritual conversation' to share our ideas, then prioritised those with the strongest appeal to the group and the highest impact on the framing questions. Each group crafted these ideas into ten sentences describing their area of service.

After lunch, we checked the plausibility of these descriptions and then shared them for voting. The next step will be to form these into a narrative that describes a vision of our ideal parish in 2034, which will be shared with the parish for feedback.



For the rest of 2024, the Discernment Group and PLDT will develop future scenarios to help us understand the resources and constraints we will need to consider on our journey to becoming the parish we want to be by 2034. In 2025, we'll make concrete plans for each service area and invite

parishioners to commit their gifts and talents to continue building our desired welcoming community of faith that draws people in and provides a sense of belonging, and fosters a deep spirituality that feeds our people and calls us in care and outreach to our community and our world.

A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed so far. It's an exciting time for our parish!

