

A PATHWAY INTO THE FUTURE

Steps Forward

HENDRA HAMILTON NORTHGATE CLAYFIELD



Response to Feedback and Steps Forward

At the beginning of 2022, Archbishop Mark appointed Fr Nev Yun as not only Parish Priest of Mother of Mercy but also as Administrator of Clayfield Parish. Dcn Peter Pellicaan was also appointed the deacon at Clayfield. This marked the beginning of the two parishes beginning to share resources, as it meant one priest and a deacon to serve the four communities which had 8 Masses per weekend. On 16 and 19 June the four communities of Hamilton, Northgate, Hendra and Clayfield were invited to a consultation about the future of the parishes and how they might repurpose assets and collaborate into the future. The document entitled “A Pathway into the Future” was distributed and all parishioners were invited to give their feedback through a survey.

The intent of this document is to provide you with a precis of the survey feedback, what it means, and what the leadership of the Parishes are proposing as the next steps.

Change of any kind is difficult, and there are significant histories in all four communities that need acknowledgement and recognition. Responses in the recent survey attest to the fact that we are not beginning with a blank canvas. Each worshipping community is the result of the investment of faith, energy, leadership, talent and generosity by many people over many years in building a community of faithful disciples. This commitment is acknowledged with gratitude. Our future has strong foundations.

Unfortunately, we also know that overall, our communities are shrinking rather than growing, and our demographic is not evenly distributed over successive age cohorts. Business as usual will not bring about the balance we seek.

In addition, our recent experiences would have undoubtedly brought home to us the fact that we do not have a surfeit of priests in our diocese who are available to celebrate Mass with us when our own Parish Priest is unavailable. All this points to change in how we utilise our human and physical resources as inevitable.

This document responds to the challenges the moment in which we find ourselves and seeks to look forward to a future that gives us the best chance at revitalising ministry in this region. Gavin Weddell, CEO of Change Activation, identifies four typical responses to change:

- The critic who opposes the change
- The victim who panics and grieves the loss of the familiar
- The bystander who ignores the change
- The navigator who's empowered to work with changing circumstances

At times, we will all fall into one of the four of these categories, but our intent is to encourage each of us to move toward the navigator position whereby we are all empowered to work with changing circumstances toward a faith filled future.

The Survey Feedback

The survey feedback revealed excitement, concern, some clarification of various aspects as well as some further solutions for consideration. Dr Judith Mulholland has provided for us a synopsis of the survey feedback using qualitative research methods. A copy of her synopsis is included in the appendices of this document. We are deeply grateful for Judith's contribution.

In summary, there was a considerable amount of enthusiasm for the proposal with parishioners glad that leadership is responding to the challenges with vision and strategy. There were concerns about selling property and what that might mean long term and there were also questions about the legitimacy of the consultation process. Finally, there were many helpful ideas regarding parish renewal, and what it might mean to re-engage those that are no longer part of our communities. There were also several suggestions that were beyond the scope of this process including things like ordaining women. There was the clear need for some clarification particularly on the issue of property sales. The following addresses some of the questions that arose in the survey.

FAQ Clarifications

Property Sales

Included in the proposal was the strategy of repurposing land – with a view to property in Hamilton and Northgate. The conditions for such a sale would include the following:

- That the land was either leased for 99 years, or else sold to another Catholic agency or entity so as to keep the land in the hands of the Church.
- That the Church buildings remain available for use by the communities.
- That moneys received from land sales not be spent but instead invested into an endowment fund to ensure a perpetual income that will not be exhausted. Such an approach would enable the parishes to fund staffing in the parish long term.

Hamilton:

- In recent years the parish purchased the remaining parcel of land at Hamilton in order that the whole property could be sold on. Mother of Mercy Parish is carrying a 4M debt on that purchase.
- It is proposed that the property at Hamilton be sold to Brisbane Catholic Education. It was originally thought that the parish would lease the church building back at low cost, but it is now proposed that the church be excised from the larger parcel of land so as to retain the church as property of the Parish. This sale would be for around 13M leaving 9M once the debt has been paid. This 9M would be invested into an endowment fund that could produce for the parish a passive income of between 300 – 500,000 per annum.

Northgate:

- Though there is considerable land at Northgate, there are no immediate plans for its sale or lease at this stage.
- It is likely that a long term (99 or 149 year) lease will be considered in the coming years.

Recruitment of Staff

- The recruitment of a team of lay ministers to lead mission across the two parishes is only possible if the land at Hamilton is sold.
- The recruitment process would involve the Parish Priest, and a panel including area experts from Evangelisation Brisbane.
- The positions would be advertised across the Archdiocese and on the Cathnews and BCE websites.

Amalgamation of Parishes

- It has not been the intention that the parishes would amalgamate at least in the short term. At this stage the goal is simply for the two parishes to share resources, collaborate and work together for the sake of the mission in this region. As we move through the process, we may find that amalgamation is desirable.

Canonical Processes

- Canon Law grants significant freedoms to a Parish Priest to make a wide range of decisions in the parish.
- This process of consultation is not required by Canon Law, but is the decision of the leadership team in order to engage the community, understand the views within the community, and seek to make change in the most collaborative way possible.
- The Parish Priest and strategic committee working across the two parishes very much appreciated your engagement in the process.

Steps Forward

In light of the feedback provided, the next steps that follow relate to the funding of mission, recruitment processes for staffing in the parishes, and a revision of Mass times.

1. Funding Mission

For all the renewal aspects of this process to move ahead, the sale of the land at Hamilton is necessary. Due to the good work of the Property Sub-Committee, the Finance Council and the Parish Priest, this process is now significantly advanced. It has been approved by the College of Consultors, the Archdiocesan Finance Council, and is awaiting final sign off from Rome. A history of the process and key steps within it are outlined in Appendix 3.

2. Recruitment Processes

Once the land is sold, we are able to move toward a recruitment process with a view to staffing in 2023. Though some positions will be more important in the short term than others, the key roles for recruitment will be:

- *Mission Director:* this is essentially the leader of the parish who oversees ministry across both parishes, manages all other staff members, coordinates and/or leads formation opportunities across the parishes, coordinates mission and ministry, and therefore allows the Parish Priest freedom to provide pastoral care and provision of the sacraments.
- *Children and Families Pastoral Associate:* This may be two part-time roles rather than one full-time role. Key responsibilities include children's liturgy at one Mass a weekend at both Hendra and Clayfield, primary school aged youth group weekly in term time, and sacramental preparation for baptisms, first communions and confirmation.
- *Liturgy and Music Pastoral Associate:* This person oversees liturgies in all four communities, ensuring rosters are completed for the various aspects of the Mass. This role will belong to someone who is not only knowledgeable about liturgical practice but is also a well-practiced musician and can train new musicians and develop a strong and contemporary music program for liturgies in collaboration with the Mission Director and Parish Priest.
- *Youth and Young Adults Pastoral Associate:* This person leads a weekly program for high school aged students during term time and a Sunday evening young adults' program for after the 5:30pm Mass.
- *Administration:* Consideration will be given to coordinating administration across the two parishes. This includes secretarial support and accounting.
- *Structure:* Something for consideration will be the development of a Mission Council that might encompass some members of the two Pastoral Councils and perhaps a representative from each Finance Council that the Mission Director

reports to. A simple staffing structure is provided in Appendix 1. It is envisaged that any structure will evolve over time as personnel become available and needs become evident. It is not envisaged that any structure will simply take over operations without regard to current processes and personnel.

3. *Mass Times*

Given that since January this year we only have one priest across two parishes and seven weekend Masses, our current schedule is not sustainable. Currently, we have around 520 active parishioners which would indicate that, as a minimum, 3 Masses per weekend would be sufficient if we were willing to change Mass times and locations. We realise that this minimalist approach is not necessarily the best way to proceed. We also realise that this is perhaps the most contentious aspect of our situation, but we must address this situation for the sake of our priest and for the possibility of renewal into the future.

The following are some guiding principles that inform the rationale for presenting these five Mass schedules as possibilities:

- Priests are not supposed to be doing more than 3 Masses in one day
- Moving locations and times week to week is not a desirable outcome
- Limiting ourselves to four Masses per weekend
- Priority given to size of gathering
- Priority given to procedural fairness: ideally 2 Masses in each parish
- Some Masses will have an intentional target parishioner e.g., Families/Youth etc... (Sunday night: Youth, Sunday morning: Families)

2022 Weekend Mass Counts for the month of May (average for the month)

Hamilton 4:30pm Vigil Mass	23
Clayfield 5pm Vigil Mass	83
Hendra 6pm Vigil Mass	21
Northgate 7:30am Sunday Mass	41
Hendra 9am Sunday Mass	119
Clayfield 9am Sunday Mass	91
Clayfield 5:30pm Sunday Mass	58

Our four best attended Masses are 9am Hendra, 9am Clayfield, 5pm Vigil at Clayfield and 5:30pm Clayfield. But Mass times also need to take into account equity across the two parishes. These five options take account of the situation at both Hamilton and Northgate in regard to the quantity of participants and their geographical proximity to both Hendra and Banyo Churches. As such, only one options retains Masses in these Churches.

The following are five possible Mass schedules for your consideration. A survey for your feedback will be provided for you to indicate your preference.

The intent is to trial these and review at the end of 2022. There is no intention to revise mid-week Mass times.

The options suggested are:

Option A

(This option is the result of a meeting between both Parish Pastoral Councils)

- Saturday Vigil 5pm: Clayfield
- Sunday 7:30am: Hamilton and Northgate Mass rotating every second week
- Sunday 9am: Hendra
- Sunday 5:30pm: Clayfield

Option B

- Saturday Vigil 5pm: Clayfield
- Sunday 9am: Hendra
- Sunday 5:30pm: Clayfield

Option C

- Saturday Vigil 5pm: Hendra
- Sunday 8am: Hendra
- Sunday 9:30am: Clayfield
- Sunday 5:30pm: Clayfield

Option D

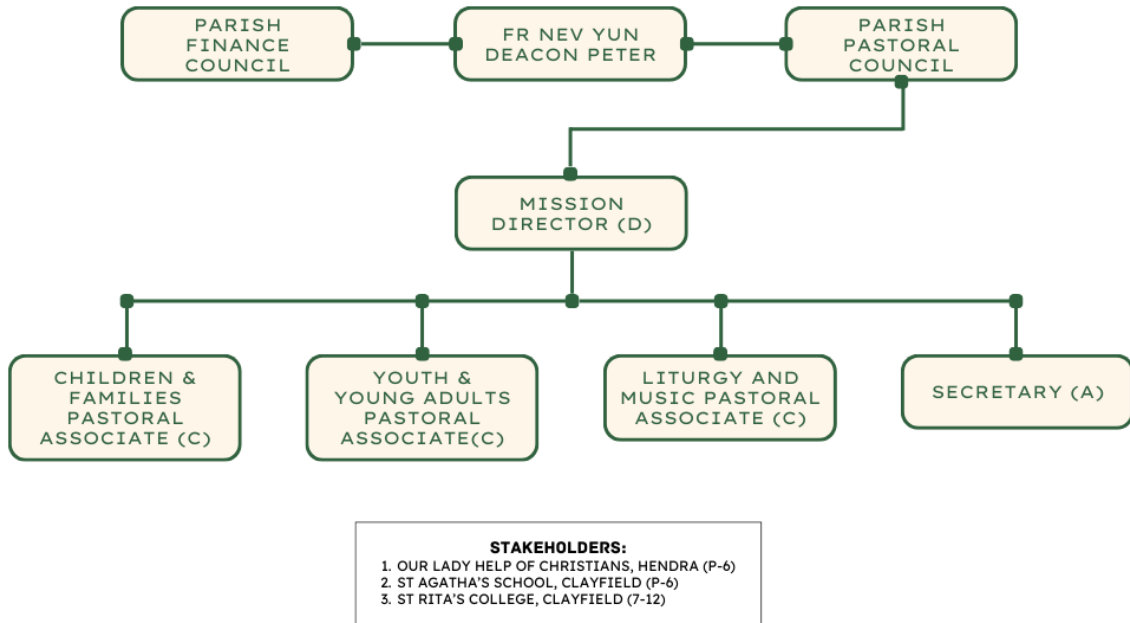
- Saturday Vigil 5pm: Clayfield
- Sunday 8am: Hendra
- Sunday 9:30am: Clayfield
- Sunday 5:30pm: Hendra

Option E

- Saturday Vigil 5pm: Clayfield
- Sunday 8am Hamilton/Northgate rotating
- Sunday 9:30am Hendra
- Sunday 5:30pm Clayfield.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Staffing Structure



Appendix 2: Summary of Survey Feedback

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to consolidate and display feedback to the document, “Let us Dream: A pathway into the Future,” recently presented to the parish communities of Mother of Mercy and St. Agatha’s.

The report is divided into three sections, one for each of the questions: What are you excited about? What are you most concerned about? What other possibilities strategies and solutions should be considered.

In order to consolidate the many responses/comments received, each was “coded” using one or more words that best described the content of the response. Similar responses were sorted into sets under a relevant heading. Further reading allowed headings to be amalgamated, so that a clearer picture of the range of comments provided and their interconnectivity was obtained. These processes are standard techniques for qualitative data analysis.

The results shown are an attempt to illustrate the whole range of different ideas expressed. It is not appropriate to give extra weight to comments made more frequently than others, because an idea expressed by a single person, may be just as important as an idea expressed by many.

Generalised statements amalgamated from all comments/responses in a set are listed below, under the heading for the set. On occasion individual comments that are either typical for the set or that make a point particularly well, have been included.

Several comments were made about the quality and usefulness of the booklet as well as its professional production, for example:

“Producing and providing the booklet "Let us Dream" to parishioners was excellent.”

Q1 We are Excited About:

For Question 1 there were 92 responses, 80 positive, 10 negative, 2 were not able to be read. A comment,

“A realistic, constructive and engaged approach to a renewal of parish life”, gives the overall idea of many responses to this question.

Question 1 Set 1: Renewal

Renewal may involve:

The chance for faith life renewal

Engagement with the current Church problems

Engagement with another parish

Diversity of ministry and evangelisation that is not just priest led. Mass times that are more suitable

Improvement in liturgy for example:

“Possible liturgical alterations for Mass to encourage families, young adults and regulars to be more engaged.”

More people at mass
Better music in liturgies.
Better connection with community

Question 1 Set 2: Community Building

Youth

Emphasis of outreach should be on youth Church
activities relevant to lives of young

Adults

Social activities /clubs
Adult formation.

Families with young children

Liturgy/music appropriate for young children.
Children's Church.
An opportunity to revise liturgical style for families.
Families are time poor and have many demands on them, it's good to have a family focus.

Question 1 Set 3: Paid Lay Ministry

A paid lay ministry would:
Free the priest for more pastoral role
Support the priest
Encourage lay leadership.

Allow for reciprocity in ministry roles because of shared baptism.
Result in a professional team that is well structured and involves lay
leaders.

For Example:

I excited about the prospect of having paid ministry leaders to lead different groups in our parish. At present, a very small number of volunteers manage most of our community life ministries, and the risk of this is always burnout, and disenchantment. However, if paid professionals were able to lead these teams, I feel that there were be increased capacity for people to feel like involving themselves, and also encouraging their friends to be involved with parish activities. I think having the financial capacity to have these teams professionally led, will richly affect the parish as a whole, and hopefully will bring more people to church.

Question 1 Set 4: Selling Property

Good idea to pay lay ministers by selling some property

Good that assets are used for spiritual gain after all Jesus was asset poor
selling or re-purposing the Northgate and Hamilton sites makes a lot of sense, and for the profits to be used for ministries

Negative Comments

Some negative comments were made in response to Question 1 particularly about asset disposal. All negative comments were included in Question 2 as they were mostly concerns of the responder.

Below is an example of a generally negative comment.

I am not excited at all. The meeting on Sunday resolved nothing. I am hopeful that some persons (committee) who know what they are doing will solve the problem

Question 2 What Concerns Us:

91 responses to question 2 were obtained.

There was a call for change to be approached with an inclusive, positive attitude. See comment below:

Be conscious that change can alienate some people. We must approach this change with an inclusive and positive attitude and make sure we keep everyone engaged.

Question 2 Set 1: The Change Process

Pace of Change

- Change is too quick
- Delay the process and organise a Think Tank with representatives: School Principal, APRE, teachers, church goers, teenagers etc.
- Too much is being implemented at the same time, concentrate on one ministry at a time.
- Property team has been engaged too soon.
- Change is too slow, speed the plan up

Validity of the Process

- Plans have already been made so this survey process invalid.
- Consultation is only apparent. See the comment below:
“The document confirms the plow is set already and we parishioners are to be not considered but told and sold as usual, so no change.”

That change will not occur

- The necessary changes to Church structure and teaching are beyond the scope of this process.
- The process of change will be too hard and people will not engage.
- This comment about anger expressed at one of the meetings as an indication of unwillingness to change.
..“the hostility and anger expressed by some parishioners. Recognising that change is uncomfortable I’d be very concerned for the future of the church to fulfil Christ’s instructions ‘To make disciples of all men’ if these sentiments prevail.”
- Language in document, “encounter” discipleship” would appeal to clergy and missionaries but may be off-putting for others.

Question 2 Set 2: Change Implementation

- How will lay leaders be chosen, at a local, diocesan or deanery level?
- Will the right people be chosen, for example the comment below:
“In my working life I saw numerous examples of well intentioned ‘mission’ activities fail due to well intentioned, but unsuited individuals being appointed to these roles.”
- How will these lay-led teams actually do the job of bringing about change? What will be their KPIs?

- If parishes amalgamate, how can we have two churches each with its own primary school competing for enrolments?
- How will Mother of Mercy and St Agatha's relate to one another if united? Will there be joint committees, for example?

Question 2 Set 3: Sale of Property

- Selling is not a good idea (15 different comments were made about not selling property).
- Lease the property and get the property to earn money (for example we are already getting a return at Northgate)
- Why would we sell and rent back? Have a longer-term plan so that property is kept and eventually provides income. For example the comment below:
"The vision of not selling land and to make a better business from it, is the only way to go to keep what you own now and make it pay for all the parishes. This Parish has good properties and don't allow them to be sold for short term gain".
- Keep the four churches and have one Mass at each.
- Why wait, amalgamate the two parishes now and keep only the churches with schools attached. One Mass centre is better than a spread of Masses.
- Difficulty working with Archdiocesan Property Team
- Letting discussion of money and property overtake more important issues

Question 2 Set 4: Community Building

- Trying to build a cross generational community, involving families, youth and older people.
- Don't make decisions based on one group alone.
- This survey did not reach the unengaged. Thus, will it help us go forward?

The Elderly

- That older parishioners may feel abandoned by the new approach
- Elderly people have the most to lose in terms of their church communities and Mass centres and times.

Youth

- Disconnect between Catholic Education and Church.
- Catholic schools do not produce practising Catholics.
- Need to engage youth who are the future of the Church.

Volunteers

- That our volunteers feel valued and still needed and are included in changes made. Also comment a in Question:
"Volunteers are not needed anymore because we will all be paid."

Families

- Need to make liturgy family friendly for parents and younger children.

Question 2 Set 5: Loss

- The loss of St Cecelia's and St. John's churches: Historic importance of these properties and the fact that St John's is a Naval Memorial church.

- Respect those who have contributed, through faith and sacrifice, for many years to St Cecilia's and St John's
- Loss of favourite Mass times and associated loss of people who will go to other churches to find a Mass time appropriate to them.
- Fear of future loss of parishioners if liturgies of the word and Holy Communion replace the Eucharist.
- Loss of a dedicated parish priest. A relationship with the priest is important to faith and community development.

Question 3, Other Strategies and Solutions

87 responses were made to this question.

Question 3 Other Strategies and Solutions

The Mass

Music

- Better Music (examples, Mainly Music by Bernadette (0477887783) or Michael Mangan)
- Music focussed on youth at some Masses for example, 5.30pm Sunday at St Agatha's
- Invite school choirs to join us for some occasions.

Roles for Children

- Encourage more altar servers (could interested children be trained at school?)
- Encourage lay/deacon led liturgy when priests are not available.
- Roles for children during the Mass. (bringing up the gifts, bell ringing).

Sermons

- Need to be shorter, better focused and well prepared.
- Sermons by laity
- Sermons that are not focused on readings.

Other Ideas

- Move Altar to middle of the church (St. Peter and St Paul's Bulimba; St Catherine's Sippy Downs).
- Encourage lay/deacon led liturgy when priests are not available. Masses are too long for families with young children.

Community

- One comment said:
"Being a Catholic is not just about Sunday Mass, it's also about how we interact in a caring community."
- Some suggested annual social events, picnics, sports, balls etc. As one comment said:
"The need to celebrate together."

Social Activity and Formation

- Cuppa after Mass
- Adult Bible study.

- Parish Bus Trips
- Play groups
- Children's Church/Sunday school.
- Cursillo Movement.
- Youth
- Vinnies
- Rosary Group
- Care and Concern group.
- Alpha movement
- Caritas
- Catholics Returning Home
- Vinnies
- A gathering space for St. Agatha's

Connecting Church and School

- Special Masses for school classes.
- Understanding how to connect with youth. For example, comment below:
"I believe that most young people do care about broader issues (environment, social justice, recognition of first nations, fair treatment of refugees) and want to positively impact the world, other issues are more problematic (for example, LGBTIQ rights). If we ask young people their views, we must listen to honest answers and respond in ways that do not alienate them forever".
- Ask people with school/youth experience to assist us in plans for future.
- Special outreach to parents, whose children are preparing for sacraments, as so many do not return to church after, Confirmation, first Communion.
- CMC has a youth member.
- Monthly Mass attendance required for families with children in Catholic schools.
- Survey/ask parents why they do not come to Mass.

Increasing Parish Funds

- Tap donation baskets
- Kindergartens associated/co-located with Primary schools.

Other

- Letter box drops for special events.
- Have a lay parish administrator to give the priest a more pastoral role.
- On-Line Mass.
- More use of texting and social media.

Appendix 3: History of Property Planning

St Cecilia's Hamilton Alienation

Mother of Mercy Parish, of which St Cecilia's is a part, is in the process of finalising the sale of all the land and buildings contained within the boundaries on Windsor, Hants, and College Streets, to Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE). The one exception is that St Cecilia's church building, is not part of this sale, and will remain in the ownership of the Parish.

The final approval of the transaction, in what has been a lengthy process, is currently being sought from the Holy See.

The following is a brief summary of the property-related events of the last few years:

- The Society of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) acquired the 'old convent' from the Sisters of Mercy many years ago. The convent basically sits in the centre of the entire site, and surrounded by parish-owned assets.
- The archdiocese (on behalf of the parish) has endeavoured to buy the site from the SVDs for more than a decade, without success.
- Despite the obvious interest from the archdiocese/parish, and countless expressions of interests from the parish, it was extremely difficult to achieve a decision-making level of engagement. Even the Archbishop's approach (on behalf of the parish) to the head of the SVDs in Australia was unsuccessful.
- In 2017, the parish escalated its engagement with the SVDs, as it was keen to re-purpose the site for the future benefit of the parish.
- For the next 4 years, the parish continued to make its representations to the SVDs, until the parish became aware that they intended to sell the property via the open market. This was not in the best interests of its friendly neighbor, the Mother of Mercy Parish.
- With the assistance of the archdiocese property team, and with the guidance and support of the Archbishop, MoM parish contracted to acquire the SVD property for \$4.4m, and this transaction completed in November 2021.
- During the latter part of 2021, the parish and the archdiocese worked on what options were available for a 'repurpose' of the entire site.
- Concurrently, BCE had just completed their 20-year plan for 'future schools', and the inner north was a critical area of concern. Negotiations commenced between BCE and MoM.
- BCE contracted to acquire the site (excluding St Cecilia's church) for \$13,115,000.
- Holy See approval is expected within two months.

The following approvals were required:

- Parish Finance Council (achieved)
- Parish Priest (achieved)
- Property and Building Committee of the Archdiocese (achieved)
- Archdiocese Finance Committee (achieved)
- College of Consultors (achieved)
- Archbishop (achieved)
- Holy See (in progress)