

# OVERVIEW

Resources  
supporting  
parishes to  
implement the  
Strategic Mission  
and  
Pastoral Goals



## Introduction

# Parish Planning Resources in light of the Sandhurst Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals 2024 - 2028

*These Parish Planning Resources provide information and processes to help parishes turn ideas about the Sandhurst Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals into a Mission and Pastoral Plan that can be implemented.*

These Resources are part of **Project 2** in the **Diocesan Formation Support Plan**.

While working with the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council on the implementation of the *Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals*, Bishop Shane Mackinlay highlighted the need for a planning process for parish use.

This planning process incorporates an approach to **Synodal Decision-Making** and a guide for **Conversations in the Spirit (Project 3)**, both of which are priorities in the Catholic Church globally. These Resources are also a companion to the **Parish Visitation Program**, providing parishes with tools to plan action in light of the Bishop's visit and his subsequent Response.

The hope for parishes is that these Resources provide practical help, guided by the Holy Spirit, to implement the SMPGoals.

The expectation is that parishes activate 'on purpose' planning and action, enlivening parishioners to go deeper into discipleship and wider beyond the parish community to where the Holy Spirit sends them — deeper and wider.

Parishes are asked to have a progress report on their Mission and Pastoral Plan within 12 months of these Resources being released.



# The Planning Resources are presented in six parts in light of the SMPGoals:

## Overview

- the SMPGoals,
- possible parish starting points
- steps in the journey
- the planning team model
- synodal decision-making
- Conversations in the Spirit.



Steps to take from a  
**Scenario 1**  
Starting Point



Steps to take from a  
**Scenario 2**  
Starting Point



# OVERVIEW

Sandhurst parishes are encouraged photocopy these resources or any page therein for use in the parish, e.g., information meetings, discussions, planning sessions. Note also: there is a Resources File containing copies of individual pages that can be used by planning groups without having to copy the full resource.

Steps to take from a  
**Scenario 3** Starting Point  
Scenario 3 leads to a  
Parish Mission and Pastoral Plan

SCENARIO

# 3

**STARTING POINT**



We don't have a parish plan, but have already prayed, discussed and discerned the key SMP Goals to focus on in our first plan

Steps to take from a  
**Scenario 4** Starting Point -  
revisiting plans/  
planning already in  
operation

SCENARIO

# 4


**STARTING POINT**



we have a parish plan or have been working on one - we can revisit, review, develop it in light of the SMP Goals

Steps to note  
for **Implementing  
and Reviewing** the  
Mission and Pastoral Plan

**IMPLEMENTATION  
AND REVIEW**



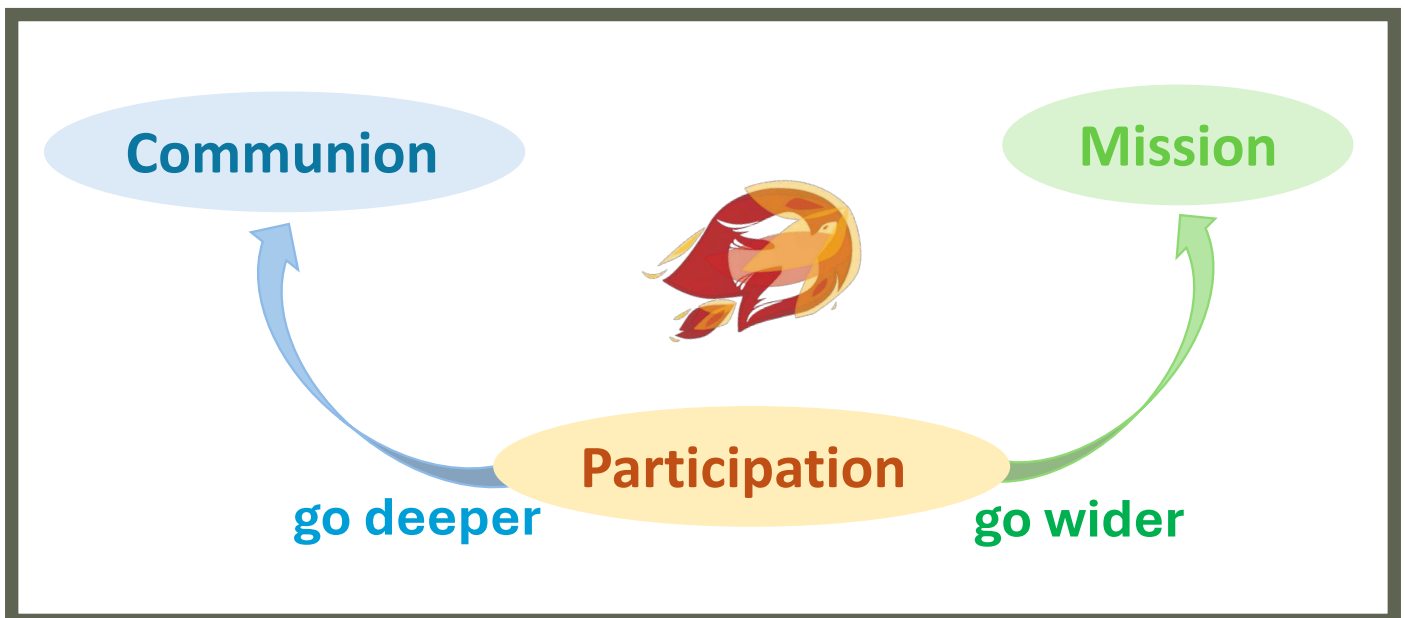
of the  
Parish Mission  
and  
Pastoral Plan

# Understanding the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals

## For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission

The recent XVI<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was based on three core pillars of the nature of the Church and its members:

- COMMUNION** – as disciples growing in deeper relationship with God and others
- MISSION** – as disciples sent by Jesus, going wider in mission with him through the Holy Spirit to others in the world around us
- PARTICIPATION** – each baptised person is called as a disciple to actively participate in this two-fold deeper and wider movement.



# Understanding the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals

## Sandhurst's Three Strategic Directions

Our Three Directions, under which the Goals are gathered, match the three pillars of the Synod, with Formation preparing, enriching and strengthening us, getting us ready to participate in going deeper and going wider.



# Understanding the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals

Here are Sandhurst's **Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals** grouped under our three **Strategic Directions** and linked to **COMMUNION**, **PARTICIPATION** and **MISSION**



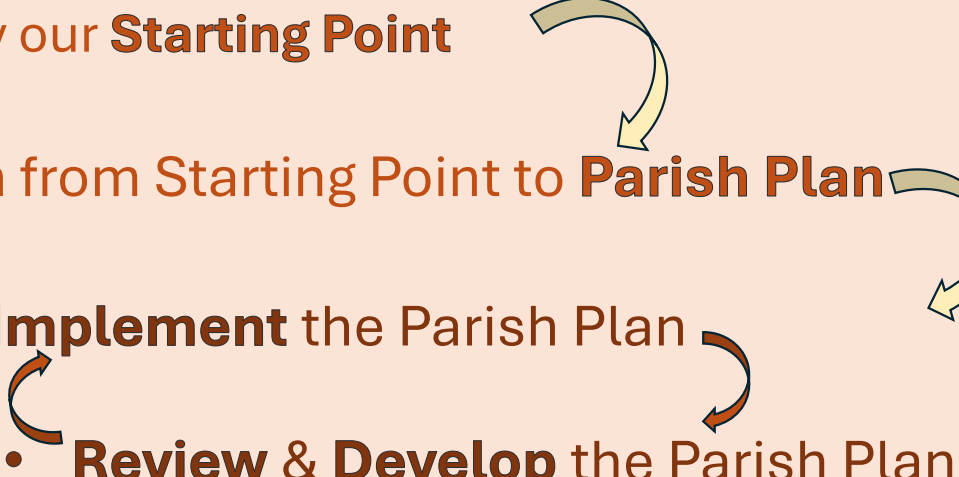
## Our task is ...

- ... to walk the three Strategic Directions
- ... by incorporating the Sandhurst Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals
- ... into a Mission and Pastoral Plan for our parish.



Taking the journey from where we are now to developing and implementing a Parish Mission and Pastoral Plan

## The Journey ahead

- Identify our **Starting Point**
  - Path from Starting Point to **Parish Plan**
  - **Implement** the Parish Plan
  - **Review & Develop** the Parish Plan
- 

## Parish Workshop available: The Mission and Pastoral Plan Resources

A time to unpack and understand ...

for priests, other parish leaders including PPC/PFC, planning teams, ministry co-ordinators

Contact the Mission and Pastoral Life Team

## Mission and Pastoral Life Team

**Contacts:** Dr Chris Cotter (Director) 0427 269 016

Geoff Gowdie (Assistant Director) 0418 759 416

Leslie Cooper (Executive Assistant to the Director) 0474 542 363

Email: [mpl@sandhurst.catholic.org.au](mailto:mpl@sandhurst.catholic.org.au)

# What is our STARTING POINT in relation to the SMPGoals?

**Suggestion:** Choose a **Scenario** that broadly matches your parish now and read what that Scenario’s leaflet outlines as steps forward, and resources to assist.

Does this sound like your starting point? If not, look at another. Perhaps you could be somewhere in between or a mixture.

A conversation could help you decide – you are welcome to contact the MPL Team.

## Scenario 1

We feel the need to deepen our understanding of some SMPGoals

Go to the **SCENARIO 1**

## Scenario 2

We understand the SMPGoals but not sure where to start with implementation

Go to the **SCENARIO 2**



## Scenario 4

We have a parish plan or have been working on one – we can revisit, review, develop it in light of the SMPGoals

Go to the **SCENARIO 4**

## Scenario 3

We don’t have a parish plan, but have already prayed, discussed and discerned the key SMPGoals to focus on in our first Plan

Go to the **SCENARIO 3**

## Some matters to be decided

### Who is our lead planning team?

The parish will need a planning team to lead the development of a Parish Mission and Pastoral Plan in light of the SMPGoals. There are generally three main options, all of which include the Pastor as president:

1. The Parish Pastoral Council
2. The Parish Pastoral Council with seconded skilled people from beyond the PPC, including a Parish Finance Council member or two, and often a facilitation role
3. A separate dedicated planning group, including a couple of PPC/PFC members, as well as other people with relevant experience and expertise.

[**Note:** Process accompaniment, guidance and facilitation can be provided to Planning Teams through arrangement with the Mission and Pastoral Life Team in the Chancery.]

### Pros and cons of each option:

Re. Option 1: The PPC is the obvious body to take on this task – mission and pastoral planning is already meant to be a key PPC responsibility. Also, overseeing the later implementation stage of a Plan would be a PPC responsibility so it makes sense for the PPC to be engaged in the Plan development.

The **challenge** for a PPC is that planning is a time-intensive task when all the other activities of the parish still require attention and organisation. This planning process cannot be done effectively as an agenda item within a normal PPC meeting. The process will require separate dedicated time. How much time will depend on the parish starting point (see p.13). On the other hand, a substantial project like this may invigorate a PPC which feels ‘stuck’ or ‘lacking in purpose’.

**Creative time scenarios for this PPC model include:** Quarantine dedicated planning time, e.g., have every second PPC meeting addressing only the Mission and Pastoral Plan (*this will make for a long process if meeting times remain monthly*) OR longer dedicated planning meetings between regular PPC meetings, say, on a Saturday morning or another time OR restricting usual PPC business to an hour at another time, e.g., a breakfast meeting, while planning takes the usual PPC slot OR increase the number of meetings for duration of the Plan’s development.

Re. Option 2: This is similar to Option 1 above in terms separate dedicated time, in which the other non-PPC people would participate, but only in these separate dedicated meetings. The **challenge** is still committing the PPC as a group to engaging in

two meeting patterns: the normal PPC meetings and the dedicated Planning Team meetings with the seconded Planning Team members. The time variation scenarios canvassed in Option 1 above could also apply here.

Re. Option 3: The Planning Team is more distinct as a project group, even though comprising some PPC/PFC members along with others brought in for their particular capacities. The Planning Team sets its own pattern of project-focused meetings. This model gives more scope to assemble a team of people who have interest, passion and capacities for the planning task and strategic thinking, and allows the PPC as a group to support ongoing parish life through its normal meetings.

**The challenge** in this model is for the Planning Team to stay well connected with the PPC via communication during the unfolding planning process. Participating PPC/PFC members would also have their normal meetings. The last two time scenarios for Option 1 could apply here as well.

**STRONG RECOMMENDATION:** Use **facilitation** either from local/network capacity or via the MPL team.

**TO PONDER:** Where our parishes are at today (and this is the case for most parishes in the western world) has taken about 500 years to bring about. Utilising the SMPGoals to change that situation will require something much more than business as usual.

## Discuss and decide the planning team model that will work best for us

### Planning Team capacities and skills to be discerned:

Do we have people ...

- with an active Catholic faith and practice?
- committed to growing as disciples of Jesus?
- with commitment to the parish community as a whole, not just a particular focus?
- with capacities that make them suitable for a strategic planning project?
- who can communicate well with others in the parish?
- who will commit time to the project?

**Facilitator briefing and training sessions** are available through arrangement with the Mission and Pastoral Life Team: could be for the PPC chair or Pastor or Planning Team leader or other person/s who have the capacity to lead the planning group through the planning process.

## Formation Support from the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Life Team

### Formation Workshops on:

- Understanding the SMPGoals
- Selecting SMPGoals to focus on
- Spirituality that animates the SMPGoals

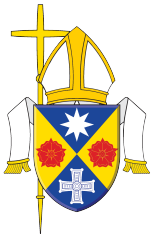
### Facilitation for:

- developing parish plans
- conducting Conversations in the Spirit
- using synodal decision-making processes

### Accompaniment on:

- parish plan development, implementation and review

**COMPANION STRATEGY**  
Enhancing local parish capacity to lead these processes



### MISSION AND PASTORAL LIFE TEAM

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**Communication, community engagement and consultation** with parishioners and key parish bodies/personnel is going to be vital through the whole process. Various processes are recommended through the Resources.

## Progress Report

It was the expectation of Bishop Shane and is the continuing expectation of Fr Brian Boyle, Diocesan Administrator that parishes get moving on planning and implementation, and provide a progress report within twelve months of the release date of this Resource.

# Discernment and Decision-Making in a Synodal Church

While incorporating Conversations in the Spirit as an important discernment tool, **discernment and decision-making in the Church** is a broader synodal process for decision-making about important issues. These resources outline processes for using both appropriately.

## What is discernment and why it is important?

Discernment is the prayerful practice of listening for God’s guidance in our daily lives and in the life of our parish. It means paying attention to what brings us closer to Christ—peace, love and hope—and recognising what leads us away. Through prayer, reflection and listening to one another, we seek the direction of the Holy Spirit so that our choices and ministries reflect God’s will. Discernment helps us become a community that acts not out of habit or preference, but out of faithful attentiveness to our baptismal call and the mission entrusted to us by Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

The steps below outline the framework for discernment and decision-making presented in the Final Document of XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, promulgated by Pope Francis on 24 November 2024. Within the framework, Steps 4 and 5 are where Conversation in the Spirit is most appropriately used within the process of discernment. See PP. 18, 19 for insights into conducting Conversations in the Spirit.

## The key steps in Church discernment and decision-making

1. Define the object of the deliberation.
2. Identify those who ought be consulted, including those who have a specific competency or are affected by the matter.
3. Relevant information provided for participants.
4. Those consulted offer input honestly, sincerely and with informed conscience.
5. Discernment undertaken, consensus sought. Steps 4 and 5 involve participants as active contributors to the decision-making.
6. The decision is formulated by appointed authority (priest or bishop), with reasons, including how consultation was taken account of. In Church law, the appointed authority is the **‘decision-taker’**.
7. The decision is implemented.
8. Implementation is monitored and evaluated.

Here is the place for Conversation in the Spirit

*Drawing on extracts from the Final Document of ‘For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission’ (#87-94) and ‘Pathways to the Implementation Phase of the Synod, 2025–2028’ issued by the General Secretariat of the Synod.*

## Conversation in the Spirit

Conversation in the Spirit can be used for a simple shared prayer/scripture reflection encounter or within a more complex Discernment/Decision-Making Process as outlined on p.13.

**Focus:** Could be a piece of scripture if the purpose is to share prayer or reflect on the Sunday Gospel; or it could be a significant Communion, Participation, Mission issue that needs Spirit-filled discernment – see the Scenario 1 Leaflet p.3, or Scenario 2 Leaflet p.7.

**Focus Question:** Formulate a question which focuses on the journey of discernment to be taken.

**Commence with a period of silence** to allow for pondering the question in light of Steps 1–3 on p.10.

**First Round of Conversation:** Moving clockwise around the group, each person has a chance to speak (up to 2-3 min.) in response to the Question, after which there is a time of silence for reflection before the next person speaks. There is no discussion in this Round.

**Second Round of Conversation:** We each share (up to 1-2 min.) what struck us most from what we heard in the First Round and/or what moved in us during the times of silence. A pause for reflection follows after each person has spoken. There is no discussion in this Round.

**Third Round of Conversation:** Finally, as moved to speak, we each share what has emerged as significant for us from the preceding two rounds. What new insights have arisen, what common themes and fruits were evident. We can speak in any order and respond to one another.

**If the Conversation Focus is an important issue that needs discernment and decision:**

Is there consensus or disagreement? What is the way forward?

The leader helps summarise the discussion and points to the next steps.

This approach to Conversation in the Spirit was used in Australia's Plenary Council and then adopted by the 2023 and 2024 Assemblies in Rome of the XVI Ordinary Synod of Bishops 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission.'



# Conversation in the Spirit

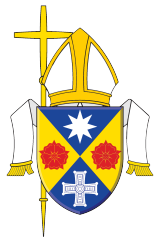
**Conversation in the Spirit can be used for** faith sharing, difficult conversations, or when lots of creativity or ideas are needed. It has been used to discuss best practice in youth ministry, synodal leadership across Catholic Social Action Network, an academic conference and formation sessions for a diocesan Assembly. It has also been used for conversations about finance, mission, working conditions, and responding to clergy sex abuse. It is an excellent tool to ground any conversation in the Spirit; to open us to new voices and possibilities, and move us to action when appropriate.

## **Conversation in the Spirit is a discernment tool**

In the Catholic tradition, discernment refers to the prayerful process of seeking God's will in one's life and the life of a Catholic community, like a parish. It is both a spiritual practice and a habit of mind and heart that helps distinguish between what leads toward God (the "good spirit") and what leads away from God (the "false spirit"). Discernment is not just decision-making; it is decision-making intentionally with God, with the Holy Spirit. Conversation in the Spirit is a way, a method to do that intentionally as a community of persons each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit through the graces of baptism.

Although this method feels slow, giving people time to think before they speak can make for very effective conversations. All voices are heard and, with each round, the wisdom of the group is built on. People start to see new connections and possibilities. It is amazing how transformative it is to listen and be listened to!

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