Year in Review 2023

Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

Acknowledgement of Country

The Diocese of Sandhurst recognises the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we live, serve and worship. We acknowledge the people of the Northeastern regions of our Diocese, Djilmathang, Minjajambuta, Duduroa and Waywurru. We acknowledge the people of the Southern regions of our Diocese, the Dja Dja Wurrung and the Taungerung. We acknowledge the people of the Northern regions of our Diocese, the Yorta Yorta and Bangerang. We acknowledge the people of the Western regions of our Diocese, the Baraparapa peoples.

We respectfully honour and acknowledge their ongoing custodianship and their connections to the land, waters and animals. We pay our respects to their culture, their Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of their peoples. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and commit ourselves to actively working alongside First Nations People for healing, reconciliation and justice.

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ON THE COVER

The Diocesan Assembly on February 15 took place at the Shepparton Museum of Vehicle Evolution in Kialla and was attended by over 300 people. Report and pictures pages 14 - 17.

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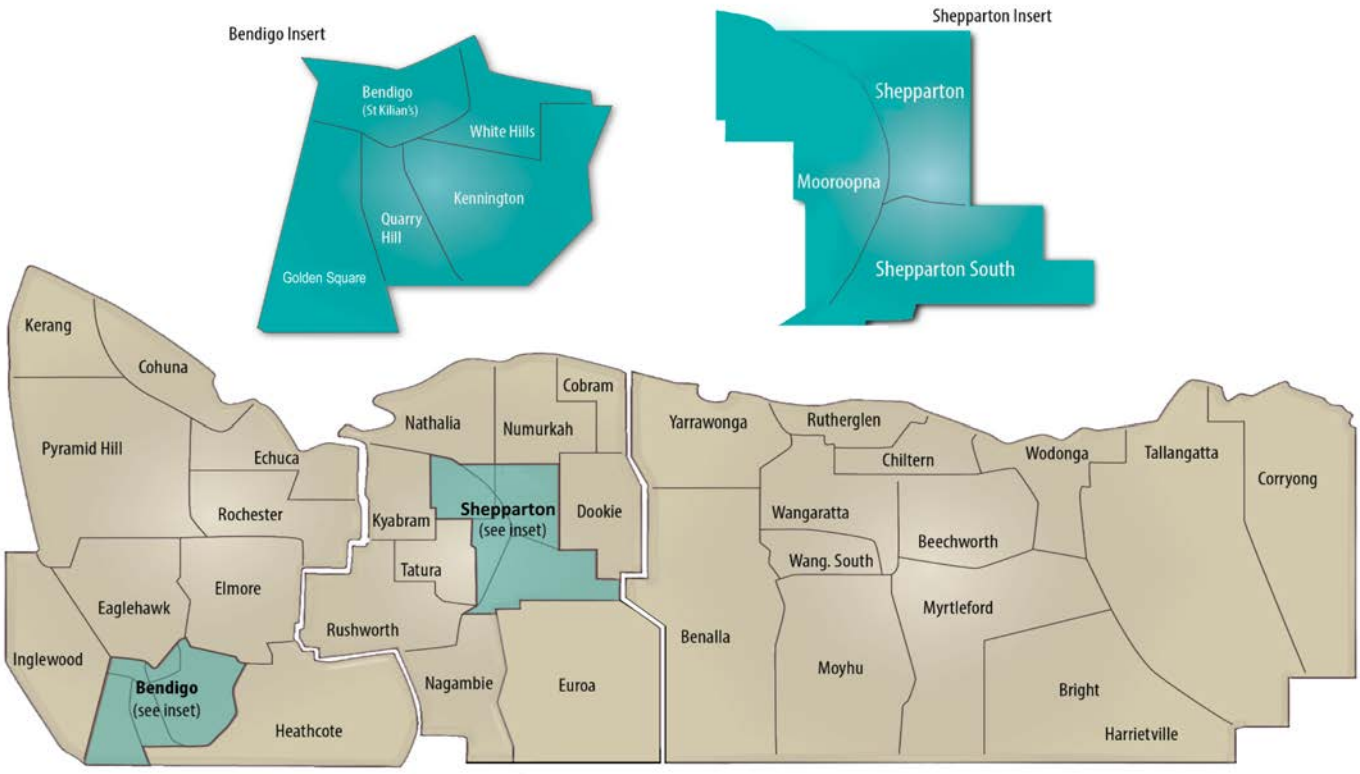
The Diocese of Sandhurst was established in 1874. It represents the Catholic Church in a region in Victoria bounded on the north and east by the Murray River, extending from Kerang to Corryong and as far inland as Euroa and Bright, covering 45,196 square kilometres.

A diocese is simply a community of Christ's faithful – it represents a portion of the people of God in a particular area, which is entrusted to a bishop. In the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst, Bishop Shane Mackinlay is the pastoral leader of more than 90,000 Catholics. He is assisted by priests who minister in 40 parishes within the Diocese. The parishes are grouped into three Deaneries, the Western, Goulburn Valley and North Eastern.

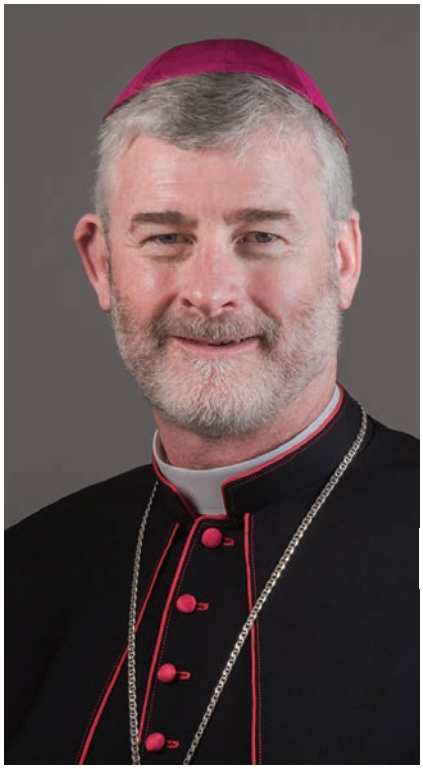
Our Diocese's vision is **'that every person's heart be inflamed by the love of God'.** We welcome all who would like to join our communities or be guided by the principles and teachings of Christ.



409,994	Total Population	40	Parishes
84,607	Catholics in region	56	Schools
48	Clergy	19,633	Students
9	Religious Congregations	1	Hospital
34	Religious	6	Nursing and Convalescence Homes

Ministries of the Church

- Bishop's Office
- Safeguarding
- Communications
- Caritas Australia
- Catholic Charismatic Renewal
- Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd
- Catholic Mission
- CatholicCare Victoria
- Clergy Life and Ministry
- Council of Priests
- Diocesan Archives
- Diocesan Consultors
- Diocesan Development Fund
- Diocesan Finance Council
- Diocesan Social Justice Committee
- Diocesan Vocations Ministry
- Mission and Pastoral Life
- Priests' Retirement Foundation
- RCIA Forum
- Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Sandhurst
- Sandhurst Clergy Health and Wellbeing
- Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council
- Sandhurst Publications
- Sandhurst Youth Ministry



From

BISHOP SHANE MACKINLAY

"Trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we continue our mission"

This year has happily seen our lives less disrupted by Covid. While it continues to affect some deeply and casts a shadow over the lives of those who lost loved ones to it, we have been able to gather regularly again for worship, schooling and employment. Tragically, though, our world continues to suffer the blight of horrendous violence. The peoples of Ukraine, Russia, the Holy Land, Sudan, Myanmar and Syria are among those suffering from senseless violence. I join Pope Francis in his regular calls for peace, and encourage all in the Diocese to pray for the intervention of the Prince of Peace to bring calm and healing to those ravaged by war and disunity.

Some parts of our Diocese are still coping with the effects of the flooding in 2022. Houses have not been returned to or repaired; livelihoods remain crippled. These communities are showing great courage and determination in continuing the effort to rebuild their lives.

February saw a momentous event in the life of our Diocese — the first Diocesan Assembly for many years, taking place in Kialla. This was a wonderful, faith-filled meeting of the people of God, passionate about our Church, aware of its shortcomings, but committed to healing, listening and evangelising. Building on the Assembly, I was delighted to finalise the establishment of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. This group of fifteen lay people and priests, from all three Deaneries, has now met with me four times, and members are becoming a cohesive group with a shared commitment to renewing our Church.

At the Diocesan Assembly, participants were asked to identify the needs and future directions of our Church in Sandhurst. Prayerful

discernment of the responses has identified four Strategic Directions for the Mission and Pastoral Council: missionary and pastoral outreach, the promotion of connections between groups, initial and ongoing formation, and the promotion of the equal dignity of women and men. The Council is now developing practical strategies and actions to address these key priorities.

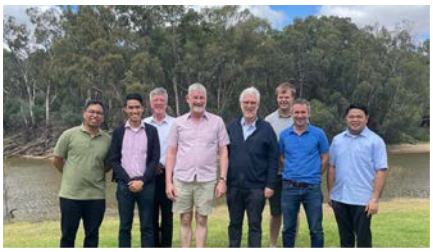
Late in the year we were saddened by the death of Fr Steve Bohan, beloved pastor of the Yarrawonga Parish, who had faithfully served the people of Sandhurst for almost fifty years. We joyfully celebrated the 60th anniversaries of the ordination of Monsignor Peter Jeffrey and Fr John Ryan. The parish of Rutherglen was blessed by the ministry of Fr Boniface Kamulegeya from Rwanda for two months. Fr Boniface brought a warm, outgoing, and generous personality to the Diocese, sharing his experiences of a life so different from our own.

In November we welcomed Fr Rene Ramirez and Fr Ruel Desamparado to the Diocese, expanding the ministry of the Rogationist congregation in Australia beyond their much-appreciated presence in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The end of the year also saw a number of priests taking up different appointments, and Fr Jake Mudge concluding his service at the seminary and returning to parish ministry in the Diocese.

Our community experienced much soul-searching and division in the lead-up to the October referendum on the Voice to Parliament. The outcome, while disappointing for many, reminds us that we need

to recommit to action that builds reconciliation and closes the gap. That can only be done by listening to, learning from and loving our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters. I pray that we may recognise and take up the challenge to pursue outcomes that will see inequalities in our country narrowed, a path to reconciliation pursued and a more prosperous nation emerge.

A major focus for me this year has been preparing to participate in the first session of the Synod for a Synodal Church, which was held in Rome in October. I have given presentations at many seminars and meetings in Australia, and also travelled overseas several times. In February, the bishops of Oceania met with others from our region in Suva, Fiji, to finalise our continental submission to the Synod. In March, I was invited to be an observer at the final assembly of Germany's 'Synodal Way' in Frankfurt, gaining an understanding of their priorities and challenges, and sharing with them our experience at the Australian Plenary Council. At the Synod itself, I was elected as the Oceania member of the committee overseeing the synthesis report on this first session. This report will be an important starting point for our own discernment in the Diocese over the coming year, as well as for the preparation that will be undertaken more widely for next year's concluding session. It was inspiring to see the very widespread commitment to ensuring that all our Church activities and structures become more synodal and participatory, so



that we can truly walk together as missionary disciples.

At the conclusion of the Synod, I participated in the annual meeting of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission, for which I am the Catholic Co-Chair. This meeting was originally scheduled for Jerusalem but was transferred to Rome because of the tragic outbreak of violence in the Holy Land.

My other major travel this year was in August, when I was able to visit India to meet with the provincial superior and families of our priests from that country: Fathers Vijay Bandanadam, Jophin Joy, Uday Marneni and John Paul Pasala. I passed on the appreciation of all our communities for the generous service of their sons and brothers, and assured them of the gratitude we feel for their ministry in our Diocese.

I am enormously grateful for the contribution made by so many in the varied areas of service in our Diocese: those working in education, social justice, community care and pastoral activity among others. May we be blessed in 2024 as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Diocese, and recommit ourselves to trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we continue our mission of proclaiming the Gospel and building up God's kingdom.

Most Rev. Shane Mackinlay DD
Bishop of Sandhurst

From

GABRIELLE DOWNIE

Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council

"Being and becoming a Church on the journey together; the people of God proclaiming and living communion, participation and mission."

The Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) is the peak consultative and advisory body to Bishop Shane Mackinlay, and it is my privilege to serve as its inaugural Chair. I was appointed by Bishop Shane on 15 July following a process of prayerful discernment by the members of the Council. Along with Bishop Shane and Fr Joe Taylor (Vicar General), the fourteen Council members are faithful women and men drawn from each of our Diocese's three Deaneries. They bring a wide range of pastoral and professional experience and skills to the important deliberative and synodal work of the Council.

After being commissioned by Bishop Shane at the Annual Mass of Oils (Chrism Mass) in Holy Week, the Council has held four meetings in 2023. The first two meetings were devoted to our initial formation as Council and we were blessed to have the expert assistance of Mr Dean Mason, a professional facilitator from Melbourne. Dean led the members in this formation, helping us get to know each other, set expectations, develop meeting protocols, and practise the skills of listening and dialogue. The August and November meetings have largely focused on developing a Strategic and Pastoral Plan for the Diocese. This plan is emerging directly out of the four Strategic Directions from the preparation and consultation conducted across the Diocese in 2022. This also includes the two hundred and fifty-two concrete proposals for action from the Diocesan Assembly held in Kialla on 15 February. It is through this important work that the Council is becoming a body that listens, discerns and acts on behalf of the whole Diocese in service of the Church's mission. It is our intent to publish and promulgate this Strategic and Pastoral Plan in 2024.

The Council is deeply committed to prayer and ongoing spiritual formation. Council members lead prayer, reflect on scripture and celebrate the Eucharist together. All members have considered their own personal calling to the ministry of leadership and service on the Council, developing an understanding of the significance of Pope Francis' call to become a more synodal Church.

At the November meeting, Bishop Shane presented to the Council an 'up close and personal' insight into the first General Assembly of the "Synod for a Synodal Church", held in Rome in October. As Bishop Shane shared his experience and broke open the Synthesis Report "A Synodal Church in Mission", each member was encouraged and challenged by the vision and task of being and becoming a Church on the journey together; the people of God proclaiming and living

communion, participation and mission. I ask for your continued prayerful support as we strive to be true to this vision.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Council for their valued and dedicated service in 2023. I acknowledge and thank Mr Paul Desmond for his contribution in our inaugural year. Paul retires as Executive Director of Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd in January 2024 and will step down from his position on the Council. His successor, Ms Kate Fogarty, will become the Bishop's appointee from CES Ltd. Thanks also goes to our dedicated officers for their tireless administrative and organisational support in 2023.

Gabrielle Downie
Chair
Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council

SMPC Members: Bishop Shane Mackinlay, Rev. Vijay Bandanadam ALCP/OSS (Northeast Deanery), Rev. Stephen Bolling (Western Deanery), Mrs Alana Brennan (Goulburn Valley Deanery), Mr Mick Chalkley (Western Deanery), Mrs Jobelle Collier (Goulburn Valley Deanery), Mr Paul Desmond (Bishop's Appointment – Catholic Education), Mrs Gabrielle Downie (Northeast Deanery), Mrs Angela Finn (Goulburn Valley Deanery), Mr Stephen McKinley (Northeast Deanery), Mr Michael McLinden (Northeast Deanery), Mr Jean-Marie Mupenda (Bishop's Appointment), Mr Miggy Podosky (Western Deanery), Rev. Jackson Saunders (Goulburn Valley Deanery), Mrs Christine Sebire (Western Deanery), Rev. Joe Taylor VG.
Officers: Dr Chris Cotter, Executive Officer, Mr Tim Nolan, Minute Secretary, Mrs Leslie Cooper, Admin.

For further information about the SMPC Members, please refer to page 34-41 of this Year In Review.

Picture-Members of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council commissioned by Bishop Shane Mackinlay.

From

DR CHRIS COTTER

Director of Mission and Pastoral Life

> "What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word 'synod'. Journeying together — laity, pastors, Bishops — is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice."
>
> Pope Francis, *17 October 2015*

Our diocesan synodal journey has reached some significant milestones in 2023. In January the Final Report on the Preparation and Consultation for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council was published, with strong and consistent themes emerging from the fifty-two meetings conducted across the Diocese in the second half of 2022. The themes were: "authentic listening and dialogue", "inclusion and openness", "communication", "a bias for action" and "hope in the face of cynicism and hurt". The themes were presented at the Diocesan Assembly and have helped inform the establishment, operations and workplan of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. As expected, a strong alignment emerged between these themes and the diocesan Synthesis for the Synod on Synodality and the decrees of 5th Plenary Council of Australia.

On 15 February three hundred and twenty-seven members of our diocesan community assembled in Kialla: priests, parish pastoral and finance council members, pastoral associates, parish volunteers, parishioners, school principals, students, Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd (CESL) staff and Chancery staff. A makeshift venue was transformed by a hardworking team from the Chancery and CESL, coordinated by Project Support Officer, Leslie Cooper. The artistic gifts of Ruth Lawlor (Sandhurst Youth Ministry Coordinator) contributed to the look, feel and sound of the venue and the program. The team created a working 'synodal' space for participants in the assembly to pray, sing, reflect, learn, listen, speak, and make concrete proposals for action to Bishop Shane for the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. At the conclusion of the Assembly, Bishop Shane called for expressions of interest from priests and the lay faithful from the Diocese to join the Council.

After a process of discernment, the members of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council were appointed in late March. At the annual Mass of Oils on 4 April, three priests and eleven lay people from each of the Deaneries were commissioned by Bishop Shane to join him and Fr Joe Taylor VG on the Council. The Council has met four times during 2023 and following prayerful reflection on the themes from the Final Report and the two hundred and fifty-two proposals from the Assembly, four strategic directions

have emerged: missionary and pastoral outreach, the promotion of connections between groups, initial and ongoing formation, and the promotion of the equal dignity of women and men. The Council is developing priorities, goals and actions to address the strategic directions. The Council has also made recommendations to Bishop Shane for people from the Diocese to attend regular meetings of diocesan bodies. Mr Mick Chalkley (Council member from the Western Deanery) was appointed to the Diocesan Finance Council, and Mrs Christine Sebire (Council member from the Western Deanery) and Mr Brendan Lindsay (St Brendan's Parish, Shepparton) now attend meetings of the College of Consultors.

Along with dozens of parishioners and some priests from across the Diocese, members of the Council also participated in the 'Sandhurst Scripture Talks' which were held in May on Zoom. The topic for this year was: The Acts of the Apostles: 'making decisions with the Holy Spirit'. Our presenters were scripture scholars Fr Brian Boyle EV (Administrator of the Cathedral Cluster of Parishes in Bendigo) and Dr Rosemary Canavan (Catholic Theological College, Melbourne). Fr Brian introduced us to the book of the Acts of the Apostles and Rosemary helped us understand how the early Christians sought the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit when making important decisions in the life of the Church. The learnings were invaluable as we discovered together what it is to be a synodal church today.

It has been my privilege to lead the Mission and Pastoral Life Team in 2023: Ms Ruth Lawlor (Youth Ministry Coordinator), Ms Katrina Strong (Communications Coordinator) and Mrs Leslie Cooper (Project Support Officer). In September we farewelled Ruth as Youth Ministry Coordinator. Ruth completed just over five years in the role and in July led a Sandhurst pilgrimage group of young adults to the 2023 World Youth Day celebrations in Lisbon, Portugal. Ruth demonstrated dedication and commitment to young people and a desire to grow and adapt the Church's ministry among them. I thank Ruth for her enthusiastic contribution to the mission and pastoral life of our Diocese. Building on this work, a Youth Ministry Reference Group has been established. This group will provide advice to Bishop Shane and the Mission and Pastoral Council on the future direction and approach to Youth Ministry in Sandhurst.

In August and October, the Office for Mission and Pastoral Life hosted four Zoom sessions entitled "Carrying Forward the Plenary Council". Parishioners from across the Diocese learnt a little more about Decree 1 (Reconciliation – Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts) and Decree 3 (Called by Christ – Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples) and participated in a simple listening and dialogue exercise which any parish or group could undertake. The exercise invited parishioners to reflect on what their faith community was already doing or could do in relation to the Decree. So, whilst the Plenary Council as an event has concluded and we await the final approval of the Decrees by the Holy See, the "Carrying Forward the Plenary Council" document reminds us that many of the Decrees contain the kinds of things that dioceses, parishes and other Catholic entities can do or are doing already.

The Sandhurst Theology Scholarships were expanded this year to include courses in Spiritual Leadership and Clinical Pastoral Education. Several parishioners have used the financial support provided by the scholarships to enrol in courses aimed at developing their theological knowledge and pastoral leadership capabilities.

The Sandhurst Pastoral Associates and Lay Coordinators Network farewelled Sr Nellie Versluys RSJ in February and since then a group of Pastoral Associates has been meeting in person and online to consider ways to support Pastoral Associates and other lay people involved in ministry in parishes across the Diocese. In August, Glen Avard (Cornella) stepped down from the role as Lay Coordinator for the Rushworth Parish. Maree Stewart (also from Cornella) was appointed and commissioned by Bishop Shane on 6 August. Maree joins the three other Lay Coordinators for Rushworth who are continuing in their roles: Rebecca Catania (Murchison), Mary Jo Fortuna (Rushworth) and Greg Fitzpatrick (Stanhope).

A month before Pope Francis promulgated his Apostolic Exhortation on the Climate Crisis Laudato Deum, Bishop Shane celebrated the first ever 'Care for Creation' Mass for our diocesan

community. The Mass was held at the Notley Camping area in the beautiful Greater Bendigo National Park. The event was organised by the diocesan Care for Creation committee, ably led by Kerry Stone, Sandhurst Caritas-Justice Coordinator.

Thank you to all who have contributed to the mission and pastoral life of our Diocese this year. We have learnt a lot about the challenges of putting the synodal way into practice and what it means to exercise co-responsibility for the mission. We have much to look forward to in 2024 as we continue our journey as the pilgrim people of God in Sandhurst.

Dr Chris Cotter
Director of Mission and Pastoral Life Sandhurst

Sandhurst Diocese Assembly

From

CAMERON FRASER

Diocesan Business Manager

As I reflect on 2023, I am pleased that we haven't experienced major political instability, natural disasters, or another global health crisis, and for this we can be thankful. When I turn my mind to world events, in particular the unfolding war in Israel and Gaza and the misery and fear in which people are existing, it provides me with a renewed appreciation of what it means to say, "there is no place like home" and how fortunate we are to live in Sandhurst with the rich bounty that comes just from being born an Australian.

This is not to say we haven't faced challenges personally and professionally in our own lives, and the opportunity to reflect on the events, experiences and accomplishments provided by this annual report is a great privilege.

This past year has seen many events involving gatherings of people from across Sandhurst and the National Church; a personal highlight was the Parish Administrators' Conference in October which provided the forum to share and learn from each other. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and will shape the event for the next year.

The committed team of people at the Chancery has grown in 2023. To strengthen the services we can provide to our parishes and agencies we have welcomed people with skills in banking, finance and law. An example of the application of these skills is the seamless implementation of a new payroll system. This software system streamlines payroll reporting and allows for the electronic capture of timesheet information and forms. It was implemented in response to increasing demand on the Chancery payroll bureau. It is planned to roll out the new system to all participating parishes in early 2024.

The commencement of a new Risk Management Framework is another initiative that has been progressing with the establishment of a Working Group made up of representatives from the Diocesan Finance Council and the Diocesan Development Fund, facilitated by the Diocesan Internal Auditors. Effective risk management is fundamental to achieving the Diocese's strategic and operational objectives. An outcome from the adoption of the risk management framework will be a policy statement and risk management principles. It is planned that these outcomes will strengthen Diocesan governance as well as assist parishes to determine their own risk framework, risk appetite and tolerance.

A major event this past year occurred on 29 May when Catholic Church Insurance entered runoff and ceased to write new policies. A company with a history that dates back 112 years and is no longer creates a great deal of uncertainty. The cost of insurance continues to climb and, after employees' wages, is typically our largest expense. It is therefore very important that we understand our risks and can take out the appropriate level of cover. The Diocese has put together a project team that has worked in collaboration with the Diocese of Ballarat to issue a tender to the market for insurance products. At the time of writing, I am pleased

that the tenders are being evaluated and it is expected a new insurance provider will be chosen well ahead of the renewal date of April 2025.

We have undertaken many projects during 2023. These have ranged in terms of value and complexity. Perhaps of particular interest has been the upgrade to the lighting at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, a project which took months to plan and execute. Prior to the 2023 upgrade, the Cathedral's lighting system with aged gas-filled globes had become increasingly costly to service and operate. Part of the Cathedral's 20-year capital works plan was to replace the old internal and external lights with new energy efficient LEDs. The new "luminaires" are now in place and can provide a range of lighting effects, all being controlled wirelessly. The lighting is much more cost-effective and has a lower carbon footprint with almost no ongoing maintenance requirements. Those of us planning to attend events at the Cathedral in 2024 will, I'm sure, be impressed by the results. Let there be light!

The Diocesan Development Fund has continued its work in the support of our parishes, schools and Catholic agencies. The Fund is a truly great example of service to Church. Throughout the year there has been strong collaboration across the fund network as we work together to support the increasing demand for capital works projects and to offer depositors competitive rates for funds held on deposit – none of which would be possible without the ongoing loyalty and support of parishes and schools. In seeking feedback on the Fund's products during the year we have increased the number of term deposit tenors available, and it is good to see in this increasing interest rate environment, strong growth in these new product offerings.

The colleagues I work alongside I know are committed to your service. I remain proud of our achievements this past year as well as acknowledging that we continue to learn from and adapt to the challenges that have also come our way. I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to everyone for their efforts, professionalism and tremendous work ethic, support of each other and the wider Sandhurst diocesan community.

Cameron Fraser
Diocesan Business Manager Sandhurst

"A personal highlight was the Parish Administrators' Conference in October which provided the forum to share and learn from each other."

From

PAUL DESMOND

Chief Executive Officer CES Ltd

"Together, we have built a community that embodies the values of faith, education, and compassion"

I reflect with gratitude and pride on the journey we have undertaken together at Catholic Education Sandhurst during 2023. This year has been one marked by both challenges and triumphs, demonstrating the resilience of our community and the unwavering spirit that binds us all in the Mission of the Catholic Church.

One of the significant challenges we faced was the impact of the floods in the Rochester area. The devastating effects tested the mettle of our schools and the broader community. However, in the face of adversity, the spirit of solidarity and support shone brightly. The way our community rallied to aid those affected exemplified the true essence of compassion and unity. It was nothing short of remarkable.

This year I announced my retirement as the Executive Director after nine years at the helm. It has been an honour to serve in this role, guiding our schools through a period of growth and transformation.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd Board and the Sandhurst Catholic Early Childhood Education and Care Ltd Board for their tireless dedication and invaluable contributions. Their work behind the scenes ensures the smooth functioning and continuous improvement of our educational system. The commitment of both Boards to upholding the mission and values of Catholic Education is truly commendable.

Throughout my time in Sandhurst, the clear dedication of so many to Catholic education has been unwavering. We believe in the value education brings to each community, fostering an environment where faith, knowledge, and compassion intertwine. The support that our schools receive from their broader communities has been instrumental in upholding the principles that define us.

We in education have been the beneficiaries of great support given to us by Bishop Shane Mackinlay and Episcopal Vicar for Education, Fr Brian Boyle, and the priests of the Sandhurst Diocese.

I take immense pride in our educators, both in our schools and in the Catholic Education Office, who give selflessly of themselves to nurture, inspire, and support our students. Their dedication is the cornerstone of our success, and it is heartening to witness the positive impact they have on the lives of the young minds entrusted to their care.

Teaching is often regarded as one of the noblest professions, and for good reason. It is a vocation that goes beyond the simple transfer of knowledge; it involves shaping minds, nurturing potential, and influencing the future.

In today's diverse and

interconnected world, teachers play a crucial role in fostering understanding and respect among students from different backgrounds. They create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity and promote a sense of unity among students.

In essence, teaching is not just a job; it is a calling. The impact that teachers have on the lives of their students and, by extension, on the fabric of society, underscores the noble nature of this profession.

Australia, like many other countries, is experiencing demographic shifts that impact the teaching profession. An ageing workforce, coupled with a decrease in the number of individuals entering teacher education programs, contributes to the shortage of qualified educators.

Addressing the teacher shortage requires a multifaceted approach involving government initiatives, educational institutions, and the broader community. Attracting and retaining teachers, especially in critical subject areas and remote communities, remains a significant challenge. Governments have a responsibility to help promote the teaching profession, providing incentives for students to study teaching and, in doing so, the Government must not prescribe where graduates begin their careers. Providing lucrative scholarships that tie graduates to a four-year teaching commitment at a government school, will have a detrimental impact on the educational system in Australia.

The theme for 2023, "May the words you speak be full of grace," has guided our choices and interactions throughout the year. This theme has inspired us to build each other up, to choose kindness, and to draw out the best in every person we encounter. It is a powerful reminder of the transformative impact our words can have on those around us.

As another academic year comes to an end, I am confident in the knowledge that we are part of a strong and healthy educational system that continues to grow. Our schools have not merely imparted knowledge; they have been havens where students are empowered to reach their full potential.

I am confident that the seeds we planted together will continue to flourish under the leadership of Kate Fogarty. She brings to this leadership role a love of the Faith, a deep experience in education and enormous creativity.

In closing, I express my deepest gratitude to everyone who has been a part of this incredible journey. I will miss so many things about Sandhurst, especially the people. Together, we have built a community that embodies the values of faith, education, and compassion. I have every confidence that the future holds great promise for Catholic education, and I am excited to see the continued success and growth of our schools.

As I bid you farewell, may God bless you all.

Paul Desmond
Chief Executive Officer
Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd

Paul Desmond with Kate Fogarty, the newly appointed Executive Director of Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd

Financial information for Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd can be found on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website: Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited | ACNC

From

JULIE COBBLEDICK

Sandhurst Catholic Early Childhood Education & Care Ltd

SCECE&C Ltd Vision is to create high–quality environments, where each child and family is accompanied on their journey of development, supported by the pastoral ministry of our Church as embodied in our Sandhurst communities.

The authentically Catholic nature of Diocesan early childhood education and care, where young children will experience being part of God's family, combined with the awe-inspiring mystery and wonder of creation, will nurture and influence significantly an holistic approach for the development of each child.

2023–2027 Strategic Plan

The inaugural SCECE&C Ltd Strategic Plan was launched by Bishop Shane Mackinlay in March 2023 at the Diocesan Leadership Gathering. The Strategic plan provides direction and sets priorities for the next five-year period with the children at the heart of our efforts to be an authentic Catholic community, with quality teaching practice, focusing on a culture of care by nurturing a healthy and safe learning environment.

The Board has developed a 2023–2024 Strategic Priority Plan with strategic goals for the 2023–2024 period. The Plan provides actions and goals for the Board under each of the five strategic community areas.

Growth Strategy & Business Plan

SCECE&C Ltd currently has two services within the organisation, Assisi Kindergarten Strathfieldsaye, and St Mel's Kindergarten Shepparton. Both services facilitate educational programs for 3- and 4-year-old children with enrolments of 154 and 88 children respectively in 2023. The MacKillop Early Learning Centre in Nagambie will open in January 2024.

The Board has continued to monitor and update the Growth Strategy, highlighting opportunities to explore potential new services for the organisation. Applications to the Victorian School Building Authority are continually being lodged, monitored and updated as new information and data become available.

The SCECE&C Ltd Business Plan has been reviewed and updated to include the ongoing finances for the existing services and the projected finances for new Projects at Nagambie and Echuca. A consolidated financial forecasting for SCECE&C Ltd has been monitored and updated periodically during the past 12-month period.

Capital Grants and Projects

Projects supported with grants allocated by the Victorian School Building Authority this year include Echuca Early Childhood Centre ($4,909,000.00), St Mel's Kindergarten Expansion ($372,133.00) and MacKillop Early Learning Centre, Nagambie ($1,800,000.00). SCECE&C Ltd has an approved loan with the Diocesan Development Fund for $2,000,000 for the Echuca Early

The five strategic community areas for which the board has actions and goals planned during the 2023–2024 period.

Childhood Centre.

Regulatory Information

The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education and care across Australia including SCECE&C Ltd and the services under our governance.

Services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the National Quality Standards (NQS) and given a rating for each of the seven quality areas and an overall rating based on these results. St Mel's Kindergarten and Assisi Kindergarten are both currently rated as services that exceed the National Quality Standards.

Conclusion

This year has been an important period for SCECE&C Ltd as the Board has continued to lay strong foundations for strengthening and growing the provision of early childhood education and care within the Diocese of Sandhurst. The ongoing rigour to policy development and approval is ensuring that our current services are compliant with the National Quality Framework and our new services are supported at a high standard to implement policy and procedures at time of opening.

The work of the Board has been supported by our Chief Executive Officer, Mr Paul Desmond. Paul's leadership and oversight have been critical during the initial 3-year period of SCECE&C Ltd. His capacity to have strong leadership of the management and operations of the organisation has been invaluable and will be part of the legacy that Paul leaves upon his pending retirement. Paul has been most generous with his time, expertise and support as the Company has built the solid foundations to ensure the ongoing and future provision of early childhood education within the Diocese of Sandhurst.

The ongoing work of Ms Carla Jeffrey Chief Early Childhood officer is to be commended. Of note is her capacity to build sound working relationships with agencies and government bodies who are pivotal to the future growth and development of SCECE&C Ltd. Carla's professional approach to communication with the Board has ensured that effective decisions are made in the best interests of the organisation. Her oversight of staff within the Unit and our current services continues to provide a high level of early childhood education and care for our children and their families.

Julie Cobbledick
Chair of SCECE&C Ltd Board

Financial information for SCECEC Ltd can be found on the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission website: Sandhurst Catholic Early Childhood Education & Care Limited | ACNC

From

REV. BRIAN BOYLE

Director, Diocesan Clergy Life and Ministry

In October of this year Pope Francis presided over XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome. This was the first of two sessions, the second session to be held in October 2024. The focus of the meeting was on the Synodal Church. Our own Bishop attended as an elected delegate of the Australian Bishops. As well as clergy participants, for the first time the Synod Assembly, had lay delegates who enjoyed voting and speaking rights.

The fruits of this Synod in distant Rome will have an important impact on our local Sandhurst Church. The Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council is already established and running, with lay members as well as younger clergy from our Diocese. The Synod members in Rome wrote a letter to the People of God outlining the process of the meeting. A synthesis report of the Synod with the title A Synodal Church in Mission reports in substance on the outcomes and the hopes of the participants. It is in the context of the momentous significance of this Synod meeting in Rome that I now present this report on Clergy Life and Ministry.

As I indicated in my 2021 and 2022 reports, the Diocese has been engaged over the last several years in developing a suite of policies on the welfare and care of the priests. This care on the part of the Diocese needs to be intentional, focused and comprehensive. The policies and their implementation are some of the principal ways of ensuring this care takes place. The documentation includes policy on the care and formation of priests; program for the welcome, support and acculturation of overseas priests working in the Diocese; policy for the support of recently ordained priests; ministry appraisal and review forms; and, policy on clergy remuneration and support. These documents all received careful scrutiny by the Sandhurst priests at the 2021 in-service at Wangaratta. This documentation is now finalised, has been collated in an attractive folder, and given to each Sandhurst priest.

An annual feature of a priest's spiritual life is the retreat, an opportunity to step back from busy pastoral engagements and devote quality time to an essential aspect of his priesthood, namely his relationship with Christ. Our practice in Sandhurst is to have an organised priests' retreat every alternate year and priests making their own arrangements the other year. In 2023 our retreat was held at Corpus Christi College in Carlton with Fr Michael Smith SJ as the retreat director. Michael proposed a most intriguing and imaginative theme and symbol for the retreat. The theme of the retreat was "The Priest as Mystagogue and Artist. Kintsugi. God Can Make Us New". Kintsugi is a Japanese art form to repair broken ceramics. Broken fragments of a bowl or glass container are moulded and shaped into something new with a gold adhesive paste so that what had initially appeared to be broken fragments are recreated into an aesthetic whole. The emphasis is on re-creation and not on repair. At the beginning of the retreat each participant was invited to choose a small glass vessel from the number of vessels Michael made available, as a compelling image of the retreat itself. The retreat was well received by the priest participants. The priest's relationship with Christ

is primary in his identity and mission. The annual retreat is an established feature for sustaining that relationship.

Another regular feature of priestly professional development is the annual in-service. In 2023 we gathered at Cadell On The Murray at Moama, NSW, from 4-7 September. Sandhurst priests are now quite familiar with this resort as the facilities and location suit our purposes very well. A number of clergy gatherings have now been held in Moama. For 2023 the theme of the priests' in-service was The Priest: earthenware vessel which holds the treasure (2 Cor 4:7). Providentially, the symbolic object of this retreat (an earthenware vessel) synthesised well with the symbol of the Kintsugi object in the priests' retreat earlier in the year. Several key presentations were made during the in-service. Dr Chris Hayes, Chief Catholic Mission and Learning Officer of Catholic Education Sandhurst, made two presentations on the theme of Finding God's Traces in All Things. Fr Jake Mudge presented on the human dimension of priestly ministry. Bishop Shane, drawing on his experience as a Synod member, presented on the theme of Synod for a Synodal Church. It was not all talking and listening; there were opportunities for leisure time together to build camaraderie. An innovation this year was time given to sacramental confessional practice, drawing on a number of hypothetical situations of sexual abuse presented in the confession, and discussion of best pastoral practice.

I have made reference in this report already to documentation formatted and prepared on the life and ministry of Sandhurst priests. The Diocese takes its responsibility for the care and formation of its priests seriously. On alternate years a seminar is run at Moama for overseas priests (incardinated or on loan) ministering in the Diocese. On other years a similar seminar is run for those priests recently ordained (five years and under).

In March 2023 a seminar was run at Moama for recently ordained priests. A welcome innovation was the inclusion of recently ordained priests from the Dioceses of Sale and Ballarat. The three rural Dioceses of Victoria were thus represented. Because almost all of the priest participants were seminarians together at Corpus Christi College, the priests knew each other well. The Diocese of Sandhurst was the host. There were ten participants from Sale, four from Ballarat and eight from Sandhurst. All three Bishops attended the whole program. The theme of this gathering was Reflections on Lived Experience of our Priestly Ministry. The emphasis was not so much on talks and presentations, but rather on input which then invited reflection together. Thus, there would be a presentation, for example, on safeguarding those in our care, or human formation and priestly identity, or synodality in parish ministry, followed by facilitated discussion in which clergy were invited to draw upon and share their own experience.

Sandhurst Diocese relies on, and is enriched by, the presence of many priests born overseas now ministering in our parishes. In 2023 we welcomed Fr Boniface Kamulegeya who ministered with great pastoral effect in the parish of Rutherglen. The Rogationist Fathers assumed the pastoral care and leadership of the South Shepparton and Nagambie parishes late this year. Fr Rene Remirez RCJ leads a community of Filipino priests in South Shepparton. Fr Henry Onyirioha who ministered in Yarrawonga parish for several months in 2022 has expressed an interest in returning to our Diocese. There have also been other enquiries from priests in India. The presence and pastoral ministry of priests born overseas and now working in our Diocese is much appreciated.

There were many other celebratory occasions in 2023 when the Sandhurst priests came together. We gathered at the Cathedral in Holy Week to celebrate the Chrism Mass with our Bishop. On 25 July we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the ordinations of Fr John Ryan and Monsignor Peter Jeffrey. Together these two priests represent 120 years of priestly ministry. At the celebratory luncheon both gave a speech, drawing on anecdotal stories of parish life as well as sharing more profound reflections on the priesthood itself. Sadly, in 2023 we noted the passing of Fr Steve Bohan, beloved parish priest of Yarrawonga, and of retired priest, Fr Peter Quinn.

In 2024 Fr Jake Mudge will become the new Director of Clergy Life and Ministry. I have exercised this ministry for the last five years. It has been a privilege to work with brother priests, young and ministry old in their ministerial formation, particularly in the contexts of retreats and in-services. With these celebrations and gatherings, the Sandhurst clergy mark another year of ends and beginnings.

Very Rev Dr Brian Boyle ADM EV
Director, Clergy Life and Ministry

From

REV. JAKE MUDGE

Coordinator of Seminarians Corpus Christi College

"The Lord is always by your side – always. Even in the most difficult moments, he is always with us. He never tires of walking with us!"

Pope Francis
World Youth Day 2023

"It was like a conversation with a caring grandfather." This was how one of the seminarians who, along with teachers and young adult leaders from Victoria, described their audience with Pope Francis in the Vatican, en route to Portugal for the 2023 World Youth Day. Some 50 pilgrims were treated to a surprise hour-long closed audience with the Pope where, in a style he prefers and has made popular, he offered pilgrims the chance to ask questions about faith, life and Church. The seminarians present were very much taken by this experience of a "conversation with the Pope" (which happened without forewarning, in case it was not possible) and for the opportunity to share this experience with their fellow pilgrims. At one point, one of the teachers in the group asked the Pope what his message to young people would be, to which he responded: "The main message I want to get across is that the Lord is always by your side – always. Even in the most difficult moments, he is always with us. He never tires of walking with us!"

The whole Seminary community (apart from the First Year Group and me who had a different program and remained in Carlton to "keep the home fires burning") were fortunate to travel to Lisbon for the event, with many of the groups away for over two weeks to accommodate side-visits to Italy, Spain and the Holy Land. Such a significant trip meant that much of the normal college calendar had to be adjusted, including the cancellation of our annual Raffle Night fundraiser and entertainment night (which will return in 2024) and some rearranging of study and pastoral work timetables.

Perhaps because of World Youth

Day, or perhaps because of the resumption of our normal schedule after the difficult years of lockdown, 2023 seems to have passed by with extraordinary pace. The seminary community has continued to enjoy the experience of prayer, study and life together, and in 2024 hopes to welcome a significant intake of first-year students (approximately 10). We also hope that Jhunel Mendez, who has been studying as a Sandhurst seminarian remotely from the Philippines, may be able to join the college community in 2024.

On a personal note, this year has been my sixth and final year on staff at the seminary. In 2024 I return to parish ministry in Bendigo and will continue teaching duties at Catholic Theological College two days a week. I have enjoyed the experience of the last six years, and look forward to welcoming Fr Daryl Montecillo, who will be the new First Year Formator in 2024.

The seminary has a very active website (www.corpuschristicollege.org.au) and FaceBook page, which you are always welcome to follow. As always, we greatly value the prayerful and material support of the people of the Sandhurst Diocese and beyond who never tire in their care for the seminary community. A special thanks to the Chancery Staff who work a lot behind the scenes to support us. Again, we renew our sincere thanks for your prayers and encouragement and offer our own prayers and best wishes to everyone for 2024.

Rev. Jacob Mudge
Coordinator of Seminarians Corpus Christi College

From

REV. NATHAN VERALLO

Vocations' Director

… pray to the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to His harvest …

In April to July 2022, we welcomed two seminary applicants on the Come and See Program. Jhunel Mendez and Jonard Cosmo, both from the Philippines. The two men spent three months in the Diocese as part of their application process. The Come and See Program gives those considering priesthood in the Diocese the opportunity to be immersed in parish and seminary life, enabling their discernment. The program also allows the Diocese to consider the suitability of these candidates; one objective of this program is a formal interview with Bishop Shane.

During the Come and See Program, Jonard and Jhunel experienced Anzac Day and visited a number of parishes around the Diocese. The men also spent time immersed in parish life. Jonard was placed in Benalla with Fr Vijay Bandanadam and spent two weeks in the parishes of Wangaratta and Moyhu.

Jhunel's placement was at the Cathedral cluster of Parishes (Sacred Heart Cathedral, St Joseph's in Quarry Hill and St Monica's in Kangaroo Flat). He also spent time in the parishes of Kerang, Cohuna and Pyramid Hill.

The program also requires applicants to spend time at Corpus Christi College, Carlton and attend classes at Catholic Theological College. Both men stayed at the seminary for almost a month, so they became familiar with seminary formation.

A week after they returned home to Cebu, Jonard expressed his gratitude to the Diocese for considering his application and giving him the opportunity to experience living in the Diocese. After serious thought and prayer Jonard decided not to continue with his application.

Jhunel also was thankful for the opportunity to visit parishes in the Diocese and stay at the seminary. After a period of discernment, which included talking with his two brothers, Jhunel decided to continue his seminary formation and to apply to be a seminarian of the Sandhurst Diocese. On the recommendation of the College of Consultors, Bishop Shane accepted Jhunel as a seminarian commencing in February 2023.

While waiting for the appropriate visa to be granted, Jhunel has spent 2023 as a Sandhurst seminarian in the Philippines on parish placement at Holy Cross Parish, Basak Pardo in Cebu City. Corpus Christi College Seminary Formators have guided him over the year and he has taken classes with Catholic Theological College online. We are grateful to Most Rev. Jose S. Palma, the Archbishop of Cebu for his cooperation in this matter. We pray that Jhunel's visa will soon be granted and that he will join us in Victoria in 2024.

I would like to express my gratitude to those who were involved in the success of Jhunel and Jonard's Come and See program, and for those who will continue to be involved in 2024.

Moving forward ...

In the past twelve months there has been a number of overseas

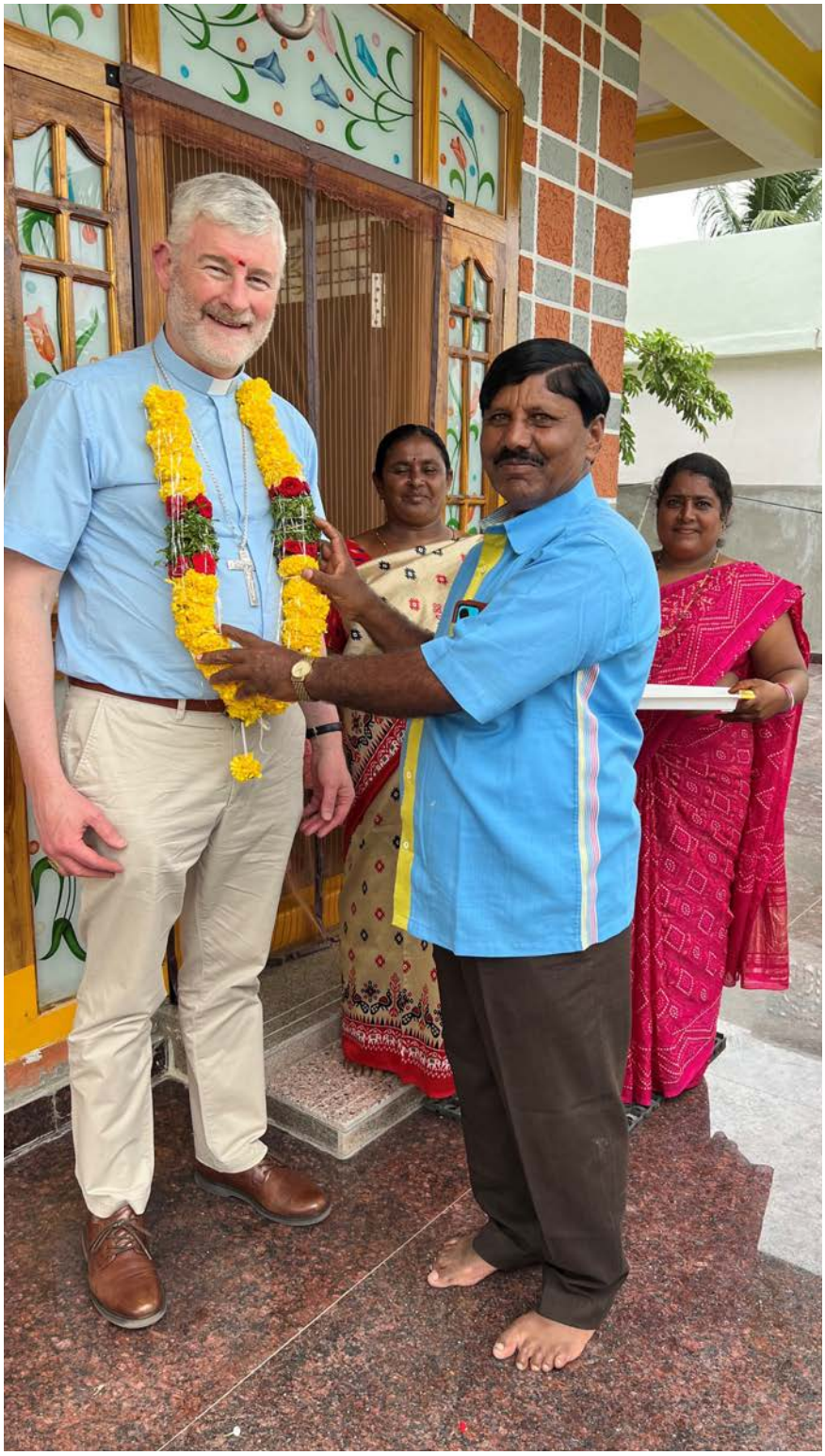
enquiries about becoming a seminarian for the Diocese.

After Bishop Shane's pastoral visit to India, we received applications for the Come and See Program. After reviewing these applications we have invited two men from India, Abishek Madanu and Anil Madanu, to participate in a Come and See Program in early 2024. This will give these men a chance to be with us for three months, to learn about the Diocese and formation at the seminary, and for us to get to know them better.

Following the recent celebration of World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, about five young men are discerning applying to become a seminarian. On November 12 (Sunday), we worked with these men to develop a Discernment Program. We are grateful that they are seeking guidance in making their decision. Please keep them in your prayers.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Bishop Shane for trusting me in this Ministry. I also thank Fr Jackson Saunders and Fr Adi Indra for their generosity in giving their time as part of the Discernment Program. I also thank the Knights of the Southern Cross and the Serra Club who consistently support the ministry of vocation through their prayers.

Rev. Nathan Verallo
Sandhurst Diocese
Vocations' Director



In August this year, Bishop Shane spent ten "fascinating and eye-opening" days in India, where he visited the families of Sandhurst priests. "It's really valuable to understand something of the background of our priests," said Bishop Shane, acknowledging that he now has a deeper understanding of the challenges our Indian priests face when adjusting to life in Australia. Bishop Shane also expressed how pleased he was to personally let the families of these priests know how much their sons and brothers are valued by people in Sandhurst parishes.

From

Sandhurst Youth Ministry

Sandhurst Youth Ministry (SYM) is a vibrant and dynamic arm of the Diocese reaching out to young people aged 15-35. SYM is committed to nurturing the spiritual growth and leadership skills of young people and strives to draw them into responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community, empowering them to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.

2023 was a significant year for Sandhurst Youth Ministry (SYM). Thirty-five young pilgrims spent many months preparing for the World Youth Day (WYD) pilgrimage to Lisbon, Portugal; the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Reference Group was established and met for the first time; and Ruth Lawlor resigned as SYM Coordinator after five years of dedicated service.

SYM aims to provide opportunities for young people to engage with their faith. As well as supporting parishes to minister to youth, SYM organises an array of events throughout the year to encourage and empower young people to actively participate in

parish life. In 2023, these included:

Pentecost (27 May)
Celebrating Pentecost has become a tradition of SYM. On 27 May SYM hosted an evening gathering for youth at Our Lady's Church in Wangaratta South. Festivities commenced with a Mass celebrated by Fr Rob Galea with music from Gen Bryant and the GB Team. Mass was followed by a barbeque, and storytelling and music around a campfire.

Ablaze Festival (6 and 7 June)
In June, SYM supported Catholic Education Sandhurst's Ablaze Festival which brings music and prayer to students in Catholic schools. In 2023 it was held at the Albury Entertainment Centre and featured Fr Rob Galea and his band. On 6 June over 700 students from ten Catholic Primary Schools in the North East Deanery joined the fun, followed by students from Catholic Secondary Schools on 7 June.

Youth Pathways 2024
In October, SYM published its annual "Youth Pathways" booklet. This handy A5-sized guide is gifted to every Catholic Year 12 student in the Diocese and can be downloaded from the Diocesan website. Youth Pathways is designed as a reference tool, specifically for young adults who are about to leave their school communities in pursuit of work, study, or both. For many, this will mean leaving, not only the support of their schools, but also their family, parish and hometown communities as they venture out into the wider world in pursuit of opportunities.

Youth Ministry Reference Group
In 2022, Ruth Lawlor, Coordinator of SYM and Dr Chris Cotter, Director of Mission and Pastoral Life, began the process of forming a Youth Ministry Reference Group. The purpose of the Reference Group is to provide support and advice to the Office for Mission and Pastoral Life and the Bishop of Sandhurst in the visioning, development, planning, implementation, and review of ministry with young people today.

The SYM Reference Group was established in late October 2023 and members were officially appointed for an initial two-year term by Bishop Shane Mackinlay.

The members are
Fr Nathan Verallo (Wangaratta and Sandhurst Vocations' Director),
Ms Georgia Gordon (CES Ltd Representative),
Fr Jackson Saunders (Shepparton),
Ms Jasmine De Lai (Mooroopna),
Mr Mason Crosier (Mooroopna),
Ms Hannah Gundry (St Kilian's Bendigo), Mr Miggy Podosky (St Kilian's Bendigo),
Ms Michaela Brooks (Numurkah),
Mr Brendan Lindsay (Shepparton),
with Dr Chris Cotter as Executive Officer and Mrs Leslie Cooper providing administrative support.

The inaugural meeting was held in a hybrid mode (online and in person) on 15 November and Michaela Brooks was elected as Chair.

Farewell to Ruth Lawlor
In late September, the Diocese farewelled Ruth Lawlor from the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Coordinator role, a position she had held for over five years.
The Diocese benefitted from Ruth's dedication to and passion for youth ministry, her theological knowledge and creative flair.
Ruth's legacy in Sandhurst is a strong tradition of local youth events and a well-connected network of young people who will build on the history and traditions of SYM.

From

ANNE McINTOSH

Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator

Safeguarding and the Implementation of the Safeguarding Standards including adults at risk — 2023

As Diocesan safeguarding Coordinator, I aim to foster a culture of safeguarding by supporting parishes to create a safe, secure and nurturing environment for all who engage with our parishes with a particular focus on protecting children, young people, and adults at risk .

Fostering a culture of safeguarding requires proactively ensuring that National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) and Victorian Child Safe Standards are met by our Diocese. To do this, I work with the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee to develop robust safeguarding policies and procedures which comply with these Safeguarding Standards. I also work with Parish Safeguarding Teams to ensure that these policies and procedures address the specific needs of people who gather in parishes and that they are understood, implemented, and maintained in the parish context.

The Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst has made a commitment to comply with Victorian Child Safe Standards (since 2017) and subsequently National Catholic Safeguarding Standards which have evolved in the years since they were first released in 2019. Parishes in the Diocese embraced Edition One of Australian Catholic Safeguarding's (ACSL) National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) which put measures in place to create safer environments for children and young people consistent with the National Child Safe Principles. In April 2021, the Diocese was audited by ACSL who found that the Diocese had achieved 96% of the implementation indicators. At the close of 2023, the Diocese complies with almost all of the Edition One Australian Catholic Safeguarding Standards, and has met ten of the twelve ACSL audit recommendations.

In December 2022, ACSL released Edition Two of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) addressing the safeguarding requirements of adults at risk. These standards reflect the duty of care owed to everyone; they recognise that there are risk factors which cause some people to be more susceptible to abuse, and acknowledge that power imbalances can occur in some Church contexts.

In 2023, my key focus has been to ensure that Diocesan policies and procedures comply with the Edition Two of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), essentially safeguarding adults and, in particular, adults at risk. I am pleased there has been a positive uptake of new online safeguarding training modules which incorporate these developments in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS).

A draft Diocesan Safeguarding Policy updated to include 'adults at risk' has been developed by the

Diocesan Safeguarding Committee and is expected to be finalised in March 2024, after soliciting expert advice. When this updated Policy has been ratified by the Bishop it will be uploaded to the ACSL Self-Assessment Portal. A summary of the policy will be distributed to all parishes to update with their individual detail.

As ACSL requires all Dioceses to be compliant with Edition Two of the NCSS by June 2024, I have focused on working with Parish Safeguarding Teams to ensure they have appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures in place and that they are putting them into practice.

In 2023, I visited twenty-five parishes and travelled approximately 15,500 kilometres to do so. To facilitate sharing of information and ideas between parishes I hosted numerous online meetings with Parish Safeguarding Personnel. In December alone, sixteen safeguarding personnel representing twelve parishes participated in online meetings and this will continue throughout 2024. I am confident that Safeguarding Teams are doing all they can to embed the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults at risk into their daily parish life, and that we will be well prepared for the ACSL audit in early 2024. Since I commenced work at the Diocese of Sandhurst, I have made over 250 parish visits. I feel privileged to work with so many committed people, many who are volunteers, who work diligently in our parishes to ensure the inherent dignity and fundamental right of all people to be respected and nurtured in a safe environment. I am grateful to Bishop Shane Mackinlay, Clergy of the Diocese and Safeguarding Officers in parishes for their unwavering support and overwhelmingly positive leadership in safeguarding activities, and I thank members of the Safeguarding Committee for their expertise, dedication and support given to me throughout the year.

I am pleased with the progress we are making and am confident that parishes and entities in our Diocese are doing all they can to apply best practice to ensure that children, young people, and adults at risk in our Diocese flourish and thrive.

The term 'Children and young people' refers to anyone under 18 years of age. 'Adults at risk' refers to any person over the age of 18 years who is at an increased risk of experiencing abuse or exploitation, including by virtue of their age, disability, diminished capacity, cognitive impairment, cultural background, life or personal circumstance.

Anne McIntosh
Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator

The Diocese of Sandhurst acknowledges that preventing abuse requires proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices within parishes, agencies, and entities, consistent with the requirements of the following:

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission)
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (edition two) (Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd)
- Victorian Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission of Children and Young People Victoria)

We are committed to the
NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

From

CatholicCare VICTORIA

CatholicCare Victoria is here to build thriving communities.
A thriving community is one where people live with dignity, choice and empowerment; a place where individuals are connected, and wellbeing is nurtured; where everyone can live life to the full. However, thousands of Victorian families, young people, children and individuals are doing it tough, with many experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

Homelessness, family breakdown, mental illness and financial disadvantage are just some of the barriers preventing Victorians from achieving their potential – and these issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A thriving community is a place where our values of respect, inclusivity, compassion, integrity and collaboration are embodied, each and every day, to bring out the best in others.

CatholicCare Victoria's Vision.
Walking in the footsteps of Jesus who came to bring life to the full for all humanity. Ours is a vision of thriving, inclusive communities where people, as created in the image of God, experience their unique dignity in a compassionate and just society.

CatholicCare Victoria's Mission.
We seek to reflect God's love for each person by enabling transformational, personal and social impact in partnership with individuals, families and communities. We bring excellence in care, compassion and hope.

Paul's story
Paul is an 8-year-old boy who was placed in Residential Care with CatholicCare Victoria (CCV) in June 2022. Paul presented with significant challenges as he was accustomed to very aggressive and violent externalised behaviours, in response to repeated relational trauma. Paul started his time with CCV in a 'high-alert' state, never being sure how safe he was, or how wanted he was.*

Our CCV team enrolled Paul in school. Initially Paul attended school for one hour per day, by the time the school year had ended he was attending school for the whole day and had even won an award for his improved behaviours.

CatholicCare Victoria's Therapeutic Practitioner and a departmental Case Manager started working together to explore Kinship Care options for Paul, because all Paul ever wanted was a safe and happy home. In September 2022, Paul's 22-year-old second cousin, Jenny, was identified. We worked with Jenny to teach her how to manage Paul's tantrums, how to establish routine at bedtime, provide healthy food options, celebrate literacy and art, and how to have fun play time with an 8-year-old boy.*

Jenny began attending the residential home to build her connection with Paul. It was not long before she took a lead in caring for him and responding to his needs. Eventually our team was able to allow Paul to visit Jenny in the community to spend time together alone. From there, he was allowed to have an overnight stay. Jenny has consistently demonstrated a keen desire to make a long-term commitment to care for Paul and the pair will be formally united as a family. This is an excellent outcome for Paul, to transition from out-of-home care to live with another family member.*

**Pseudonym used to protect the privacy of families and individuals we work with.*

A look into the past year ...

Parish Administration Conference at the Chancery.
In October, CatholicCare Victoria was delighted to present on our program of offerings at the Sandhurst Parish Administration

Staff conference at the Chancery. Parish administration staff know their parishioners and the issues they are experiencing. So, it is important that they are aware of the vast array of services CCV provides to ensure referrals are made to the appropriate people.

Launch of the Children's Contact Service.
In July, CatholicCare Victoria launched a new Children's Contact Service (CCS) in Wangaratta with funding received from the Attorney-General's department. The CCS provides support for separated families to manage contact or shared care arrangements for their children. It provides parents and carers with supervised visits at a safe and neutral venue with the children they do not live with. The service also provides facilitated changeovers, to enable children to move smoothly between their separated parents or carers.

Magistrates Court of Bendigo and Heidelberg.
Late in 2023, CatholicCare Victoria launched a pilot program for an early intervention diversion program. CatholicCare Victoria had been approached by the Magistrates Court of Bendigo and Heidelberg to create a pilot early intervention diversion program, aimed at supporting young people to avoid being placed on personal safety intervention orders. This is the result of an emerging trend, where courts are being used to manage conflicts between students at primary and secondary schools.

Youth Justice funding renewed.
CCV's Youth Justice funding has been renewed in Bendigo, with an increase in referrals for Youth Justice Group Conferencing.

Parish Engagement – Grief Workshops.
CCV's Engagement Coordinator and Advisor met with Dr Chris Cotter, Director of Mission and Pastoral Life, to explore ways to support volunteers in parishes who are in turn supporting and comforting their fellow parishioners in bereavement. A Grief Workshop was developed and in July it was delivered in Kerang to people from across the Diocese with the assistance of Fr Dean Bongat. The aim of this workshop was to arm volunteers with the knowledge they need so they are better prepared to support people in their communities who are dealing with grief. Feedback received from attendees was positive.

School engagement.
In April 2023, CatholicCare Victoria's Engagement Team presented to Year 11 students at St Augustine's College in Kyabram on Catholic Social Teaching and how it relates directly to the work of CatholicCare Victoria. The feedback received was very positive and the Engagement Team hopes to be invited to present to more schools across the Diocese of Sandhurst during 2024.

CatholicCare VICTORIA
Strengthening families & communities

Pictured — Agnes Sheehan
Chief Executive Officer CatholicCare Victoria

Kalma Rathouski,
Engagement Coordinator, CatholicCare Victoria
Speaking at the Parish Admin Conference

The Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral COUNCIL MEMBERS

Gabrielle Downie, Chair

Originally from Corryong, Gabrielle Downie has lived in Benalla for thirty years and has worked in Catholic education in the Diocese for thirty-nine years having held three principalships throughout this time. Gabrielle has taught at St Joseph's Cobram, St Patrick's Tongala, St Joseph's Benalla and St John's Euroa.

Prior to her current position as Principal of St Patrick's Primary school in Wangaratta, Gabrielle was the principal consultant for the Northeastern Deanery at Catholic Education Sandhurst where she supported principals of the fourteen schools.

Gabrielle has been a member of the Benalla Parish Pastoral Council for over ten years and held the position of Chair for four of those years.

Fr Vijay Bandanadam ALCP/OSS

Fr Vijay is a priest of the Apostolic Life Community of Priests in the Opus Spiritus Sancti and is presently Parish Priest of St Joseph's Benalla. He was ordained in Kerala, India in 2009 and after ordination worked in seminary formation as well as parish ministry as a priest before coming to Sandhurst in 2018.

In Sandhurst Fr Vijay has served as Assistant Priest at St Kilian's Bendigo and at St Patrick's Wangaratta before being appointed as Parish Priest of Benalla in January 2019. Fr Vijay is a member of the College of Consultors.

Stephen McKinley

Stephen has a strong interest in creating a more welcoming Church which actively includes youth in parish life. Stephen has a depth of experience in youth ministry, having worked as a Leader at Youth Mission Team Australia for over four years, and in Sandhurst, as a member of the Youth Advisory Group (with Fr Rob Galea) and a member of the Stronger Planning team for ten years.

Stephen holds a Master of Theology and has over twenty years' experience teaching in Catholic schools (Primary and Secondary). He is currently teaching religious education at Catholic College Wodonga and has been the Religious Education Coordinator at St Joseph's Primary School in Chiltern and Sacred Heart School in Yarrawonga.

Michael McLinden

Michael and his wife Angela are parishioners in the Wodonga parish. Michael is currently a member of the Parish Council and Finance Committee dealing with

property maintenance.

He is special minister to the sick and elderly, lector at Mass and prepares the Saturday Mass for the parish priests. He has also supported the altar servers for a number of years.

During the school years of his children, Michael was an active member of the School Council and Catholic Education Wodonga Council (CEW) and was CEW Chairperson for several years. "I have found that education is such an important part of my children's development as a Christian and member of the Catholic community. The success of CEW aided this development," says Michael.

Michael is a private building surveyor with over thirty years' of experience.

Alana Brennan

Alana is a mother of five, a former primary school teacher and, with her late husband, operated a dairy farm at Tongala for 40 years until her husband passed away five years ago. Now in partnership with a son and daughter-in-law, the family farm continues.

Alana is experienced in governance and fiscal responsibility having held many leadership positions in her community, including the dairy industry, St Patrick's Primary School, Governance Committee of Tongala Health, Tongala Football and Netball Club, Tongala Community Activities Centre, Shire of Campaspe Audit Committee and lately, Chair of St Augustine's Parish Pastoral Council.

Alana has worked in Adult Education and Workplace Training and has a depth of experience liaising with government agencies. As Drought Officer for the Shire of Campaspe from 2003 to 2009, Alana established programs to address the psychosocial, emotional and monetary needs of affected farmers and business owners.

Jobelle Collier

Jobelle is a parishioner of St Brendan's, Shepparton. She provides a voice and perspective of a young mother and a woman who migrated to Australia as a teen. Prior to having a family, Jobelle was part of her parish Stronger Youth Team and has been involved in diocesan youth and young adult parish ministry.

Jobelle is someone who loves a challenge. She is the creator of Pangarap Podcast, a series for young Filipinos; and has created podcasts on daily Mass readings. During the Shepparton floods Jobelle made food for hundreds of volunteers from her well-known Nanna Marce food truck.

Jobelle spends a good amount of time in her parish and wider community which she finds important to informing a well-rounded idea of God's love and His heart for us.

Angela Finn

Angela has held many leadership positions in the Diocese of Sandhurst. She was Religious Education Advisor for Catholic Education Sandhurst, a member of Faith Education Sandhurst, and a member and coordinator of the Diocesan Mission and Ministry Team which set up Sandhurst's original Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Angela led the Sandhurst RCIA Forum and has been involved with the RCIA program at parish and diocesan levels for many years.

Angela has been a teacher, Deputy Principal, Principal and Catholic Identity Leader in schools in Sandhurst.

Angela was the facilitator of the original Sandhurst Sacramental

Members of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council were commissioned by Bishop Shane Mackinlay at the Chrism Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Tuesday 4 April.

Writing Team which wrote "Steps In Faith: A Parish based Approach to Sacramental Preparation". Alana has worked with both adults and children in each of these endeavours, always focusing on teamwork, inclusivity, listening and acting.

Fr Jackson Saunders

Fr Jackson was ordained a priest of Sandhurst in March 2022 and is currently Assistant Priest at Shepparton.

Born and raised in the Diocese, Fr Jackson was Youth Ministry Coordinator for three years prior to entering the seminary.

He has visited and worked in every Sandhurst parish and has a love for and knowledge of the people in the Diocese.

Fr Jackson is passionate about missionary and pastoral outreach and understands the importance of clergy and laity working together in a spirit of synodality in our parishes, schools and organisations.

As a seminarian, Fr Jackson held leadership roles in Wangaratta, St Kilian's and Echuca Parishes. Before entering the seminary, he held leadership roles at St Mary's, Golden Square, and St Monica's, Kangaroo Flat.

Fr Stephen Bolling

Fr Stephen was ordained a priest of the Diocese in September 2015 and is currently the Parish Priest of Eaglehawk, which includes St Liborius' in Eaglehawk and St Mary's in Inglewood-Marong. Prior to this appointment he was Assistant Priest at the Cathedral Cluster of parishes.

Fr Stephen is an experienced administrator and holds a Bachelor's degree in computer science and communication. He is familiar with technology which can facilitate effective communication and interaction with large groups of people; to find ways to better plan consultations in parishes which encourage dialogue, mutual understanding and positive outcomes. Technology aside, Fr Stephen is an advocate of authentic listening.

Michael Chalkley

(also Member of the Diocesan Finance Council)

Mick brings his experience as a married man with adult children and a depth of experience in Catholic education and parish life. Mick is a parishioner of St Therese's, Kennington where he has served as Chair of the Parish Pastoral Council and in ministries of Lector, Eucharistic Minister, singer, and Leader of Liturgy of the word and communicationwithout a Priest. As Co-Principal of St Peter's Primary School for the past five years, he has also become active at St Kilian's Parish, Bendigo.

Mick is a member of the Knights of the Southern Cross and is involved with the Bendigo Interfaith Community and Bendigo Winter Night Shelter and, with his family, is an ongoing supporter of Caritas Australia.

Mick worked at Catholic College Bendigo for 26 years in roles of Principal, Deputy Principal and Religious Education Coordinator and is well versed in Child Safety Standards, OH and S requirements and the governance structures within the church.

Miggy Podosky

Miggy is a teacher at St Peter's Primary School in Bendigo where he is coordinator of Catholic Identity, Religious Education

Coordinator, Pastoral Wellbeing Leader and Behaviour Support Leader.

He has current experience in leadership roles inside and outside of professional and ministerial work. These roles include Youth Ministry Leader, and service with Outreach Teams and Advisory Council with and for Stronger Youth.

At St Kilian's Parish, Miggy serves as Lead Altar Server, a member of the Parish Pastoral Council, and Music Ministry—Young Adults Team.

Miggy has also held various leadership positions throughout his sporting career, highlighted by captaining the Philippines Men's National Cricket Team in 2023.

Christine Sebire
(also attendee at College of Consultors)

Christine says she is blessed to be developing a strong and ever-evolving faith manifested by her family upbringing, Catholic education, twenty years working as a teacher in Catholic Education and ten years working as a Pastoral Associate at St Mary's, Echuca.

Christine is a member of the Echuca Parish Sacramental Team, Parish Justice Team, the Laudato Si' Team, and the Parish Women's Group. She is also a member of Education Sandhurst's Catholic Identity and Learning and Teaching Committee.

Christine holds a Master of Religious Education and aims to keep abreast of current themes in the Church via Encyclicals, Catholic writers, academics and initiatives such as Divine Renovation.

Christine is passionate about the Church and believes that for it to grow, we must not only open the doors of our churches but go out to meet people and embrace new ways of being Church, actively living our faith through justice and compassion and, thereby, encouraging others to join us.

Kate Fogarty
Bishop's Appointment

Kate commenced work as the Executive Director of Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd in January 2024. Kate was recently the Principal of Assumption College Kilmore, served as Principal of St Joseph's College Echuca from 2008 to 2014 and Director of Catholic Identity at Catholic College Bendigo (now Catherine McAuley College) from 2006-2008.

Kate holds postgraduate qualifications in Education, Educational Leadership and Arts, and Theology. Kate has a clear understanding of the challenges and the opportunities of regional life in a constantly changing social and educational landscape. Kate is very clear about the strength of her association with the Diocese: "Sandhurst is where I truly grew into myself as an educational leader, and it is where I was both inspired and formed into a deeper level of authentically Catholic educational leadership. I am profoundly humbled to be charged with the responsibility of building on the legacy of those who have gone before, while simultaneously walking alongside, in a new way, those who carry the flame today."

Jean-Marie Mupenda
Bishop's Appointment

Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council

Jean-Marie is an active parishioner at St Brendan's Shepparton where he combines expertise in Information Technology and Project Management to assist the parish with various church activities, including updating the parish website.

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jean-Marie is a member of the Goulburn Valley African Communities Association and has organised many events to highlight the plight of African Children effected by poverty, disease and war.

Jean-Marie also interprets for new Congolese arrivals to Shepparton and has become a leader of the African community in Shepparton. He understands what inclusivity and welcoming mean in a practical sense.

Fr Joe Taylor VG

Fr Joe is the Parish Priest of St Brendan's Shepparton.

Fr Joe was ordained a priest of the Diocese in May 1974, and brings fifty years of experience as a priest of the Diocese to the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council. As the Vicar General he is a member of the College of Consultors and Diocesan Finance Council.

Dr Chris Cotter
Executive Officer

Tim Nolan
Minute Secretary

Leslie Cooper
Administration

The Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council members at the inaugural meeting in Shepparton.

Sandhurst Youth Ministry

WORLD YOUTH DAY

Pilgrimage to World Youth Day in Portugal and Retreat in Spain

As a global event, World Youth Day reinforces how Catholic faith is universal; there are so many believers across the world, which is very inspiring.

Fr Jackson Saunders, WYD Chaplain

Sandhurst Diocese Pilgrims

Thirty-five young adults from across the Diocese spent months preparing for the pilgrimage where they joined over 345,000 registered pilgrims from 143 countries for five days of worship and fellowship. The 2023 WYD theme chosen by Pope Francis was from Luke's Gospel: "*Mary arose and went with haste*" (1:39).

A key focus for SYM in 2023 was the Sandhurst Pilgrimage to the 27th World Youth Day festival event in Lisbon (1-6 August).

The pilgrimage was coordinated and led by Ruth Lawlor. Ruth's leadership was strengthened by the appointment of Fr Jackson Saunders as Chaplain and Michaela Brooks as Pilgrimage Assistant by Bishop Shane Mackinlay.

Pilgrims were supported financially with part-sponsorship from either the Diocese or Catholic Education Sandhurst. Expressions of interest closed on 10 March and pilgrims gathered for the first time as a group on Sunday 30 April at the first of four pre-pilgrimage formation sessions. These young pilgrims wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity to strengthen their faith and forge enduring connections with fellow pilgrims. The group was commissioned by Bishop Shane on 16 July before departing from Melbourne on 29 July. After Lisbon, pilgrims immersed themselves in a retreat in Avila, Spain (7-11 August) where they reflected on their experiences and their faith journey over the months since they had first gathered.

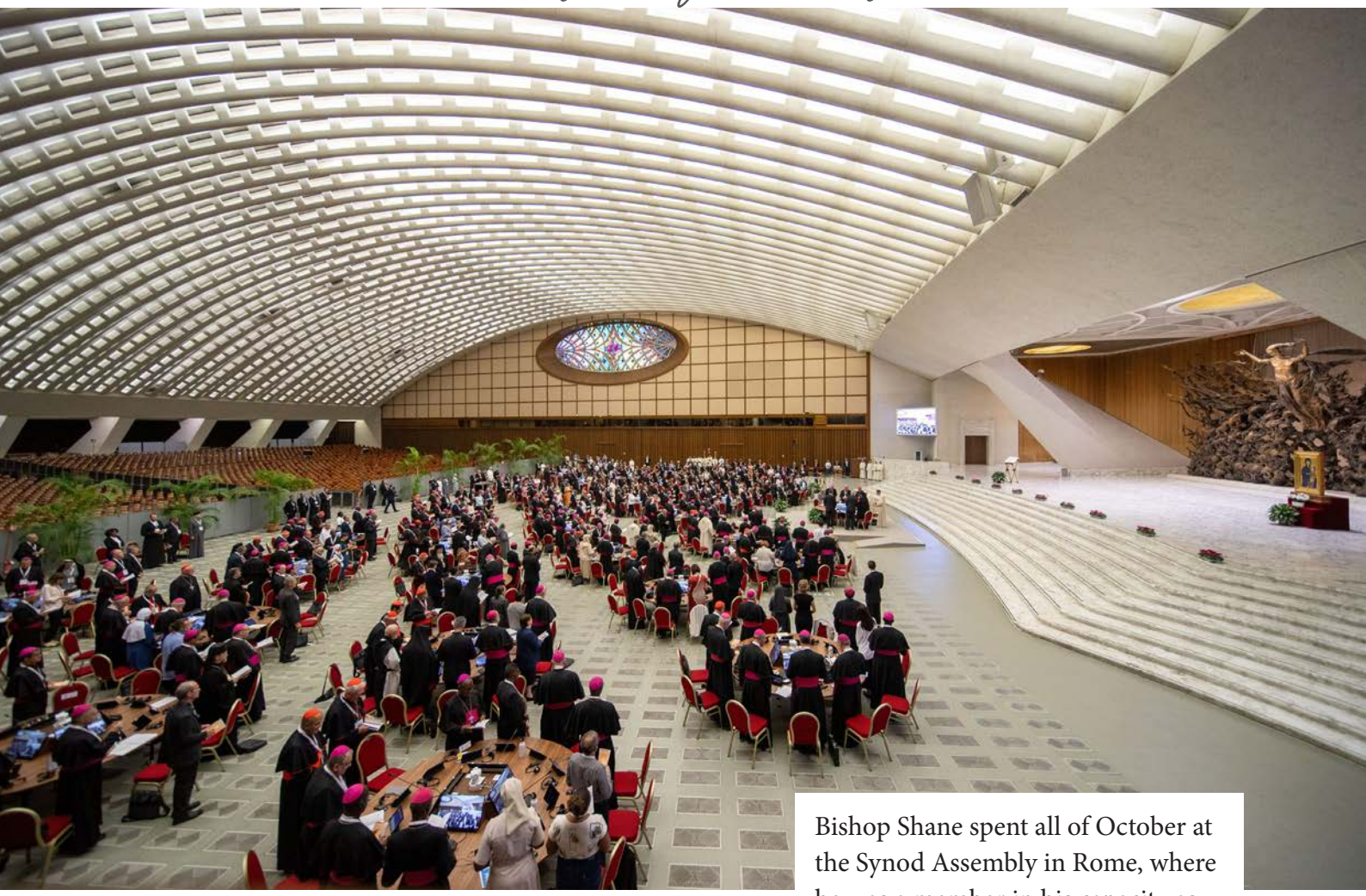
A pilgrimage reunion in Shepparton on 8 October was well attended. Pilgrims, inspired by World Youth Day, are heeding Pope Francis' words and being *"protagonists for change in the world"* by teaching and volunteering in their parishes and living as disciples of Jesus. Some pilgrims have also been appointed to the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Reference Group.

SYNOD
FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

450 delegates from all over the world travelled to the Vatican City for the Synod on Synodality.

"The primary task of the Synod:
to refocus our gaze on God, to be a Church that looks mercifully at humanity." Pope Francis.

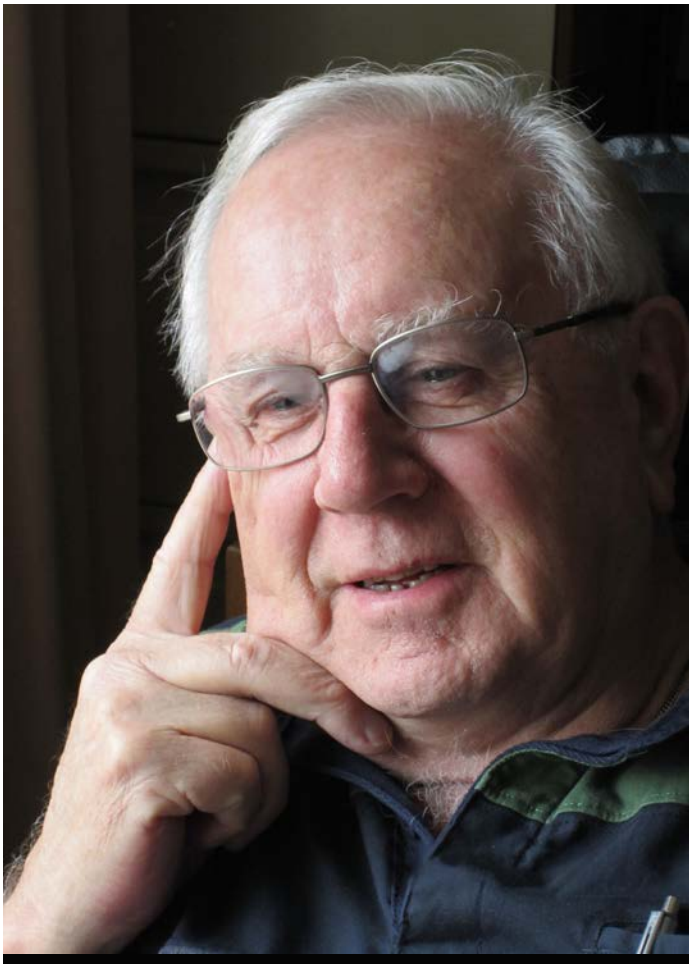
Synod for a Synodal Church



Bishop Shane spent all of October at the Synod Assembly in Rome, where he was a member in his capacity as a delegate of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

Bishop Shane then stayed on in Rome to co-chair the twelfth phase of the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission (MERCIC), which took place from 30 October to 3 November. The MERCIC meetings were to take place in Jerusalem but moved to Rome with the outbreak of War.

Monsignor Peter Jeffrey



Fr John Ryan

Celebration of Service

2023 JUBILARIANS

"To love God and to love God's people is at the very centre of a priest's existence. To live that out in prayer and service, is the way that priests make sense of their life and find meaning." Most Rev. Leslie Tomlinson

1963 Diamond Jubilarians
Monsignor Peter Jeffrey and Fr John Ryan

On 25 July 2023 St Patrick's, Wangaratta was abuzz with people who had come from far and wide to celebrate the diamond jubilees of Monsignor Peter Jeffrey and Fr John Ryan.

Both priests were ordained on the same day sixty years ago (27 July 1963) by Bishop Francis Thomas, who laid his hands on Mons. Jeffrey at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo, then travelled to Wangaratta to ordain Fr Ryan. Fortunately, Bishop Thomas, the Bishop of Geraldton at the time, knew the roads well, having been a Sandhurst priest for 32 years before being ordained a Bishop.

"Peter and John, two fine priests who have served the Church and people with distinction in those varied fields wherever the Spirit led them. Always Spirit lifters, not Spirit crushers. No matter where they roamed, they always called Sandhurst home.

Many of us gathered today would not have experienced these two men in full flight. Articulate, spiritual, hardworking, and respectful of their congregations.

Each has contributed significantly to the Big Church and assisted in the development of our wonderful Diocese. We thank them for their long years of fruitful service."

Monsignor Frank Marriot

Fr Steve Bohan

IN MEMORIAM

Fr Steve Bohan is remembered as a man of deep religious faith and deep convictions; an exceptional leader who "went the extra mile to help people" and "threw himself into the local community".

Fr Stephen Thomas Bohan
5 July 1948 ~ 22 August 2023

Fr Steve Bohan returned to God less than two months after retiring as Parish Priest of Yarrawonga on his 75th birthday, in the 50th year of his ministry as a priest.

Fr Steve is remembered as a man of deep religious faith and deep convictions; an exceptional leader who "went the extra mile to help people" and "threw himself into the local community". A keen sportsman and historian who had a knack for "opening-up" scripture so his parishioners could see its relevance in their lives.

Fr Steve was the third of four sons born to Margaret and Frank, was uncle to ten and grand-uncle of 25.

Born and raised in Benalla he was educated at St Joseph's, Benalla, FCJ College, Benalla and Champagnat College, Wangaratta.

In 1967 Fr Steve entered the seminary at Werribee and was ordained a Priest at St Joseph's, Benalla in 1974. He served as a priest in Rushworth, St Kilian's Bendigo, Wodonga and Yarrawonga, where he served for a total of 23 years.

Fr Steve also spent four years as priest in charge of seminarians at Corpus Christi College and spent two years studying in the United States of America.

From the Archives

SACRAMENTAL REGISTERS DIGITISATION PROJECT

The Catholic Church is one of the richest repositories of genealogical data in the world. Every year, the Diocese receives requests for information from family history researchers and parish historians.

In 2023, Phase Two of the Sacramental Registers Digitisation Project commenced. Since 2016, Diocesan Archivist, Dr Donna Bailey has been working on this project, which initially included a complete audit of all parish sacramental registers, prioritising which registers need to be salvaged first and establishing which parish sacramental registers have been lost or destroyed by fire over time. The first phase of the Sandhurst digitisation project started in 2016 when selected Baptism, Marriage, Confirmation and Death/burial registers from Beechworth, Benalla, St Kilian's, Dookie, Eaglehawk, Echuca, Heathcote, Numurkah and Shepparton were digitised — a total of 43 registers.

In 2023, selected registers from Sacred Heart Cathedral, Nagambie, Euroa, Elmore, Marong, Inglewood, Cohuna, and Tallangatta, totalling 31 books, were digitised and further digitisation is planned for other parishes in 2024.

After Phase Two of the project has been completed, approximately 120,000 individual sacramental records in 74 sacramental registers will have been digitised.

Digitising sacramental records increases the efficiency with which sacramental records can be accessed and records identified and, importantly, it helps to preserve the integrity of the original ensuring they are kept in perpetuity. After the Parish sacramental registers have been digitised, each parish receives all records on a portable hard drive. Parishes are strongly encouraged to use this resource when searching for records. To preserve the original registers, parishes are provided with archival housing to store the register books so they can be permanently preserved.

The Catholic Church is one of the richest repositories of genealogical data in the world. Catholic Sacraments not only record names, dates and places, linking people to a specific time and place, they also link people to other people, recording the names of godparents or sponsors, for example. Furthermore, Catholic sacraments such as baptism and confirmation provide information which is obviously not recorded by government organisations. In some places in Victoria, the Church was keeping records before government organisations. This is not so unusual; in many parts of Europe, for example, Catholic registers reach back as far as the 1500s.

Every year, the Diocese receives requests from family history researchers and parish historians for marriage, baptism, confirmation, and burial information. Only records over 100 years old (Baptisms) 60 years (Marriages) and 30 years (Deaths) may be released to the public in keeping with civil and Diocesan Policy.

Sacred Heart Cathedral

RED WEDNESDAY

On 22 November, Sacred Heart Cathedral was lit in red, joining the global Red Wednesday Campaign in a show of solidarity for persecuted Christians. A prayer vigil for persecuted Christians was held just after sunset. The new lighting system providing the technology to light the Cathedral in colour had been installed just days before the Vigil.

Bishop's Choice Award

Catholic Education Sandhurst
MACKILLOP ART AWARDS

Pope Francis has been a powerful voice calling us to recognise that we are deeply connected to all parts of creation, and to commit ourselves to concrete actions that help this integral ecology to flourish.

"*Regent Honey Eater Totem Project*" – a collaborative mixed media artwork by Year 11 Religion and Art students at Galen College, Wangaratta. The work chosen by Bishop Shane Mackinlay as the winner of the 2023 Bishop's Choice Award from secondary school entries in Catholic Education Sandhurst's MacKillop Art Awards. In his letter to the awardees Bishop Shane wrote:

"Pope Francis has been a powerful voice calling us to recognise that we are deeply connected to all parts of creation, and to commit ourselves to concrete actions that help this integral ecology to flourish. Your work of art draws on both indigenous totems and Christian patron saints to encourage a renewed commitment to local action to care for our common home."

Bishop Shane's choice from the primary school works was a marker and paint work titled "*Let the Words You Speak be Full of Grace*" by Bella Lappin, a Year 6 student at St Joseph's Primary in Chiltern. Bishop Shane wrote in his award letter to Bella:

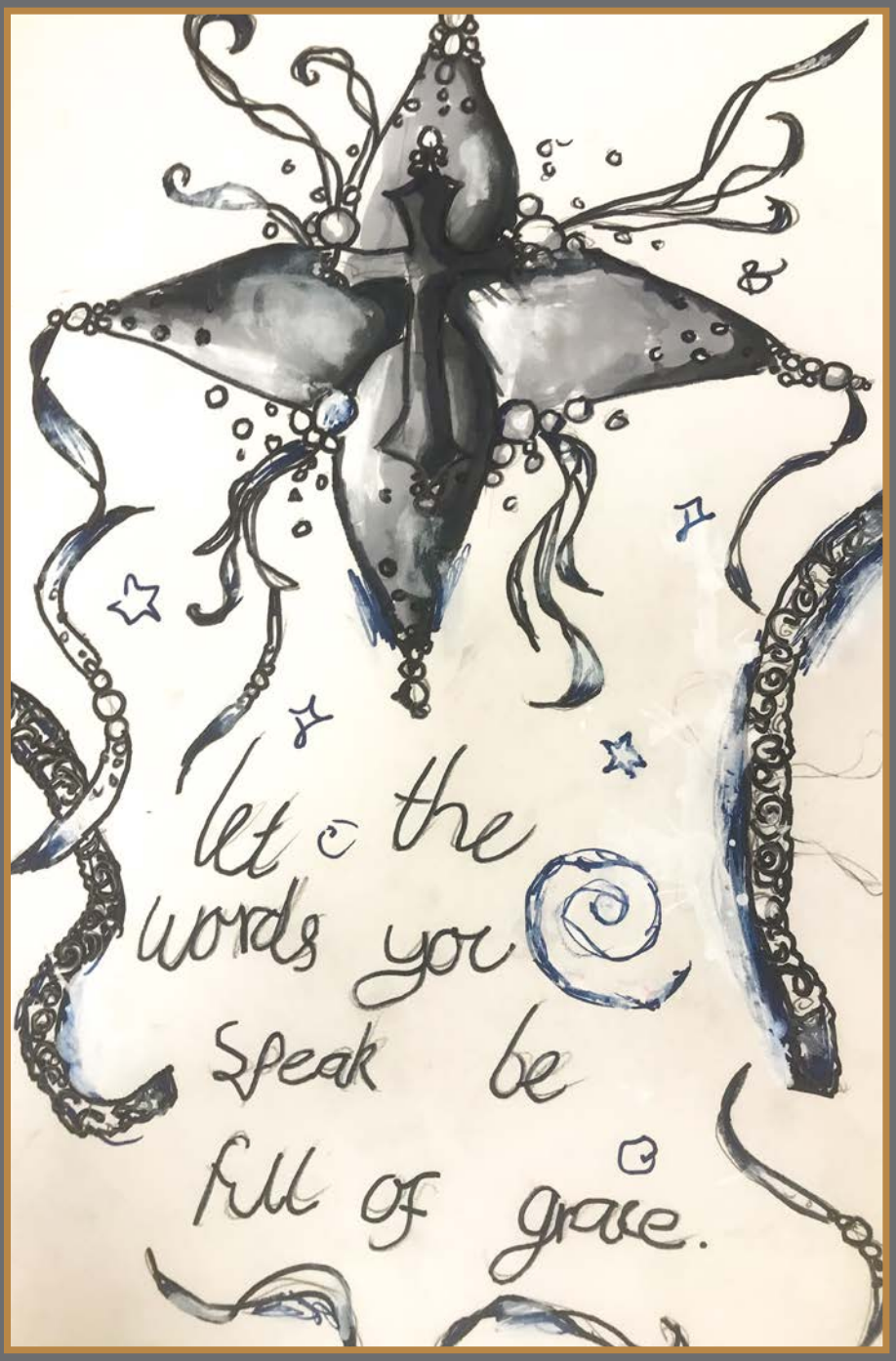
"Your work of art thoughtfully and beautifully illustrates the way that love and grace reach out and embrace us, when we experience God's love for us, and when we share that love with others."

The Bishop's Choice Award was presented for the first time in 2022 in recognition of the connection between Bishop Shane Mackinlay and the Sandhurst education community which he serves. Bishop Shane acknowledges the importance of celebrating, affirming, and supporting the students of Sandhurst in their creative endeavours and the award highlights the value of The Arts in the life of the church.

REGENT HONEY EATER TOTEM PROJECT

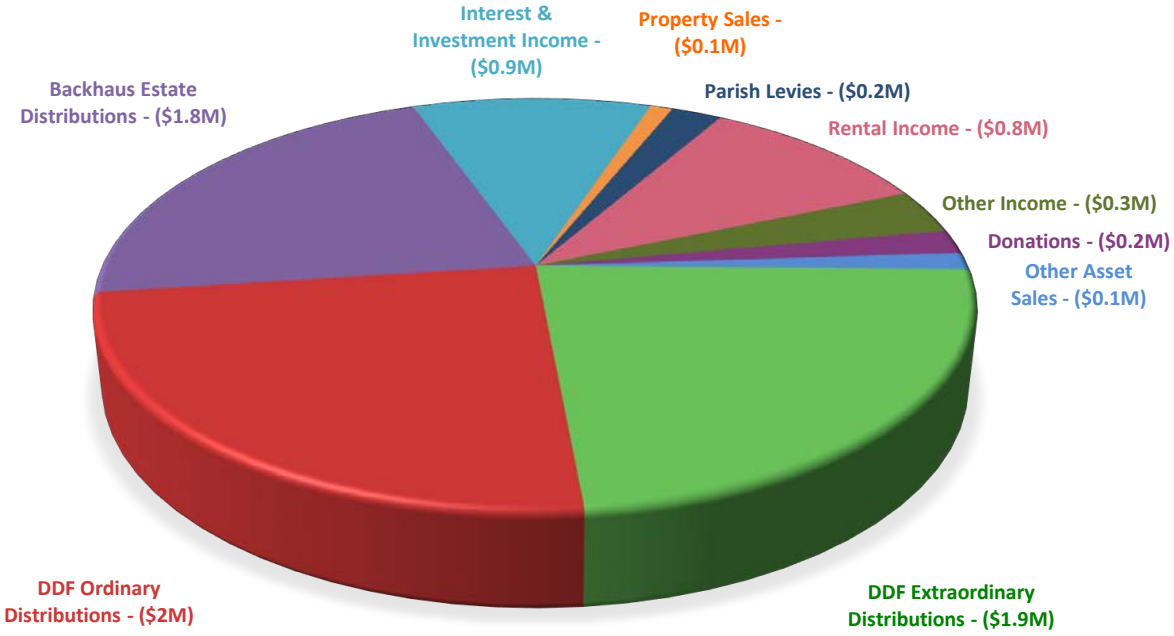
by Year 11 Religion and Art students
at Galen College, Wangaratta

by Bella Lappin,
a Year 6 student at St Joseph's Primary in Chiltern



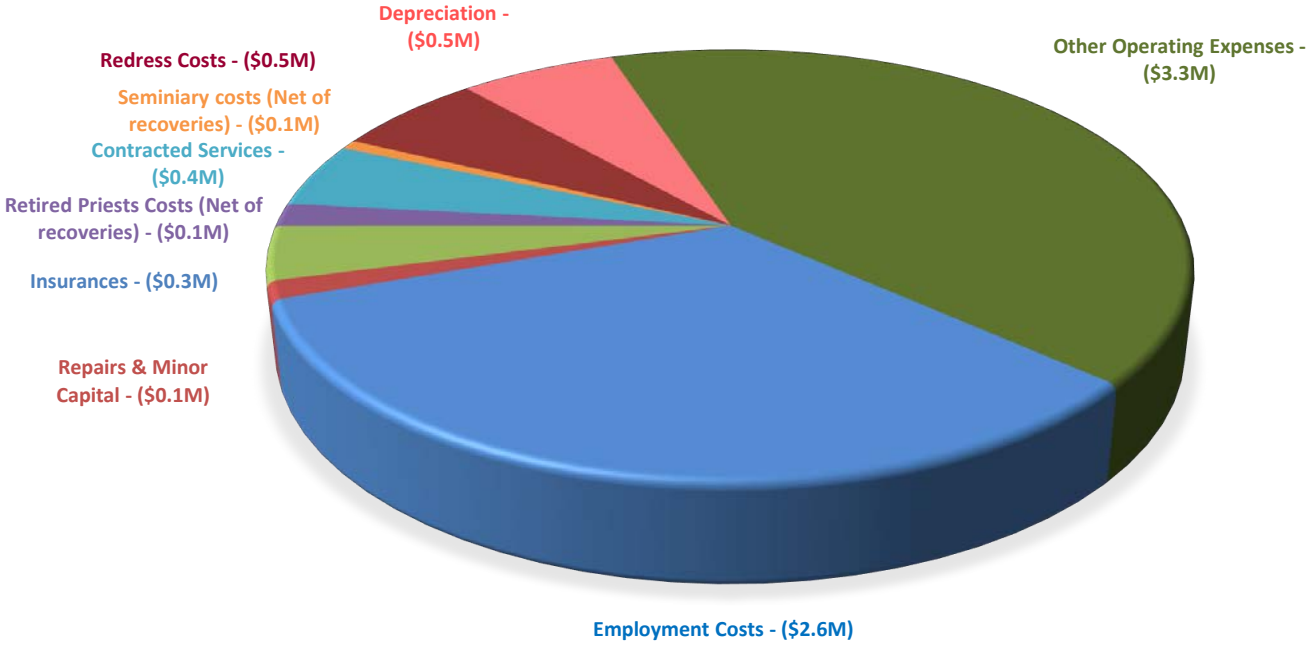
LET THE WORDS YOU SPEAK BE FULL OF GRACE

INCOME

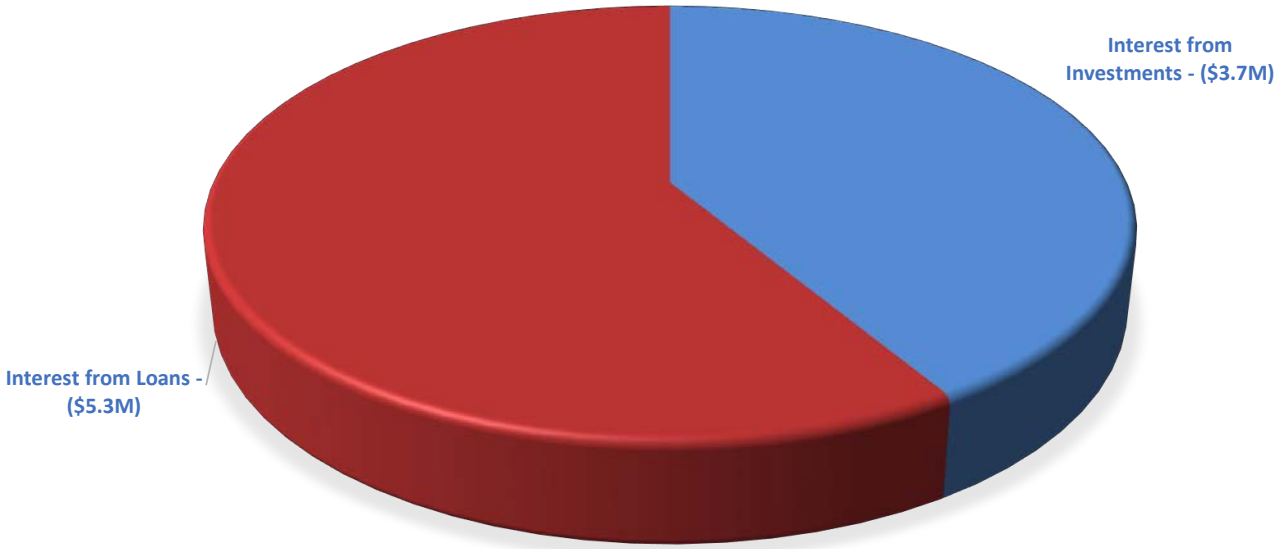


CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

EXPENDITURE

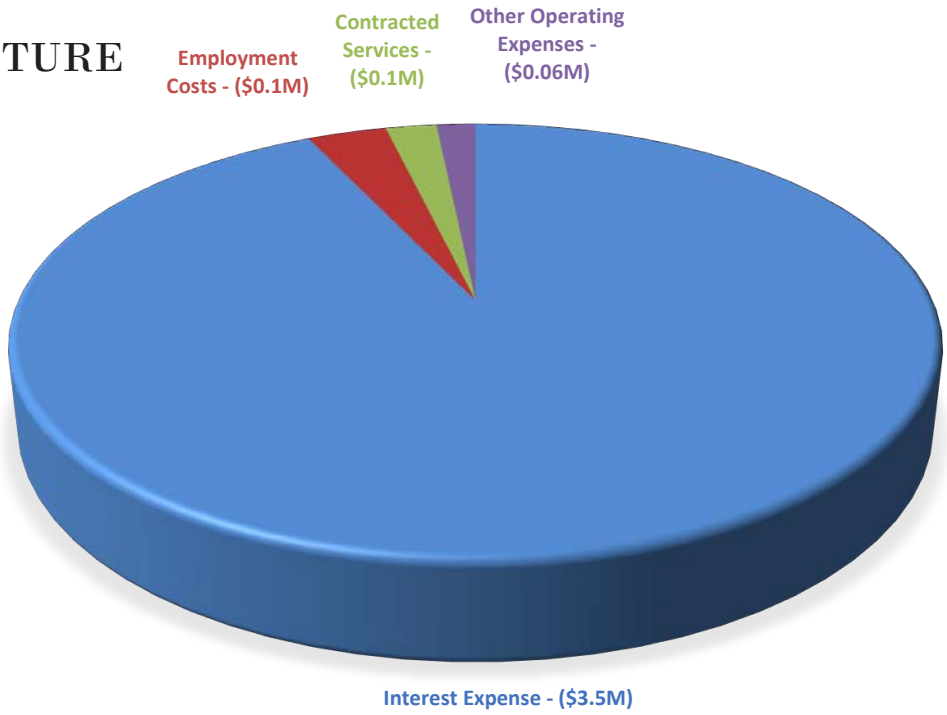


INCOME



DIOCESAN DEVELOPMENT FUND

EXPENDITURE



Caring for Our Common Home and working towards Laudao Si' Goals via *Catholic Earthcare*

Friday 1 September: On the World Day of Prayer for Creation, an outdoor Mass was celebrated by Bishop Shane at the Greater Bendigo National Park to launch the Season of Creation.
Galahs flew in to perch on surrounding Kamarooka Mallee, and wildflowers rustled with the breeze – as if they knew the Gospel Reading was about them.

Bishop Shane was joined by clergy and parishioners, students and teachers from across the Diocese. After Mass, participants stayed to enjoy a picnic and sausage sizzle in the glorious surrounds of the park.

Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst