

A PASTORAL PLAN FOR THE GEELONG REGION

Produced in consultation with the people of the Geelong Region
from September 2001 to March 2004, by the
Geelong Deanery Pastoral Planning Group.

Invitation For Comment From Parishioners

This document is being distributed to parishes and Catholic schools of the Geelong Deanery for comment. These comments along with some additional suggestions already received from Parish Priests will be considered prior to the document being finalised.

Responses may be made c/- Fr Kevin Dillon, St Mary of the Angels, 136 Yarra St, Geelong 3220 or on the Deanery web site: www.GeelongCatholics.org by Friday 13-May-04.

A copy of this document is available from your Parish Priest or on the Deanery web site.

*A gathering, open to all parishioners, will be held on **Thursday 20-May-04 7:30pm - 9:00pm** at Sacred Heart College, Aphrasia St, Newtown to review this document in the context of the Pastoral Planning for the Geelong Deanery. It is planned for the final version of this document to be formally accepted at the Deanery Committee Meeting in late May.*

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	2
SACRAMENTAL SERVICES	2
PASTORAL SERVICES.....	2
PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT	2
PASTORAL LEADERSHIP	2
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES.....	2
OVERVIEW.....	3
HISTORY	3
SHARED VALUES.....	4
SHARED REALITIES	4
TIMING AND SCOPE.....	4
PART A: SACRAMENTAL SERVICES	5
PROPOSAL IN RESPECT OF SACRAMENTAL SERVICES	5
“KEY” APPOINTMENTS	5
“OTHER” APPOINTMENTS	6
PART B: PASTORAL SERVICES	8
PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT	8
PASTORAL LEADERSHIP	8
PART C: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES.....	9

Notes:

1. V6.0 Revised after Pastoral Planning meeting of 12-Feb-04.
2. V7.0 Revised after meeting with parishioners at Winchelsea on 11-Mar-04.
3. V7.2 Revised after Pastoral Planning meeting of 24-Mar-04.
4. V7.3 Added “Invitation For Comment” to page 1 after Deanery Meeting of 30-Apr-04.
5. V7.4 No change in content, just revised response dates on invitation for comment.

This is a draft document being circulated within the Geelong Deanery for comment and review prior to submission to the Archbishop as a formal proposal from the Geelong Deanery. Any decisions regarding the appointment of priests will be at the discretion of the Archbishop.

Executive Summary

A Pastoral Planning Process in the Geelong Deanery commenced in 2001 to plan for effectively supporting and enriching parish communities should the number of Priests in the Deanery be reduced. The resultant Plan provides a guide to immediate actions to enhance the **sacramental, pastoral** and **administrative** life of all of the communities in the Region.

Key Elements of the Plan

Sacramental Services

The plan is based on identifying key **appointments** in the Deanery and articulating particular strategies for providing Mass at as many centres as possible in the event of any one of the Deanery's appointments not being able to be filled. Each strategy relates to the failure to fill a particular "other" appointments. **See page 6.**

We propose that the Archbishop be advised of this assembly of individual strategies, which are designed to be employed in the event that any one of the thirteen priests currently "on appointment" in the Geelong Deanery leaves his current assignment and there is no replacement to be found within the Archdiocese

Pastoral Services

Proposed actions are grouped under two headings, Pastoral Development and Pastoral Leadership. **See page 9.**

Pastoral Development

Recognising the work already done by the Deanery Pastoral Development Team the Deanery will:

- Commission and resource the Deanery Pastoral Planning Group to provide advice and help to all communities in developing required pastoral services.
- Engage consultation from other dioceses which have reported some success in these areas.

Pastoral Leadership

Recognising the need for communities in the Deanery to discover and develop appropriate leadership candidates the Deanery will:

- Establish and appropriately staff a pastoral formation group that will provide tools, faculty and assistance to communities in all the areas of community leadership.
- Encourage all priests to engage actively in the development of collaborative leadership structures within each of the communities in their appointments.

Administrative Services

Particular areas of administrative function are identified in the plan. Our proposal is to address each of these areas in turn by engaging those people currently working on those activities to build and implement an integrated plan for that particular activity. In doing this we will build on and properly

- utilise existing capability,
- fully respect the rights of individuals currently active in administrative tasks,
- meet legal requirements,
- be cost effective
- and most closely meet the needs of the communities being served. **See page 10.**

Overview

The most recent round of actions in the Pastoral Planning Process in the Geelong Deanery commenced in 2001 to plan for effectively supporting and enriching parish communities while the number of Priests in the Deanery continued to reduce. This Plan is the outcome of that round in the process of consultation and deliberation on the issues involved. It represents both an interim step (as all such plans need to be kept under constant review) and a guide to immediate actions to enhance the sacramental, pastoral and administrative life of all of the communities in the Region.

History

The process to date has involved extensive consultation with all communities in the deanery and deliberation by the Deanery Planning Group, parish groups and others. Key steps in the process have been:

- Following several initial meetings of a “Pastoral Planning Committee”, established by the Deanery, a meeting was held at Sacred Heart College, facilitated by Fr Brian Bainbridge in September 2001, and attended by nearly 200 parishioners from throughout the Deanery. Consequent to this meeting, a questionnaire was developed and issued to all Parishes which sought details of personnel, facilities, assets, organisations, services etc..
- In the first half of 2002 the Parishes made responses to the questionnaire.
- During 2002 the Deanery Planning Committee reviewed all of the responses and developed a summary report.
- In February 2003 all Parish responses were sent to each Parish, along with a request to provide comments/suggestions with regard to areas of agreement and disagreement, negotiable features and most critical elements.
- By April 2003 most Parishes had responded.
- The Deanery Planning group was expanded.
- Data relating to weekend Mass schedules and average attendances had been assembled for the Geelong Deanery.
- Some Parishes were already independently discussing possibly sharing or joining together.
- The Deanery Planning Group continued to investigate ways to share resources such as administration.
- In September 2003 a draft plan document, in the form of a "white paper" was written to bring some focus to the complex considerations.
- In February 2004, version 6 of this document was discussed with Bishop Mark Coleridge who shared it with Archbishop Denis Hart as a “work in progress”. Archbishop Denis Hart in a letter to Fr Kevin Dillon dated 25-Feb-04 expressed his appreciation “..for the valuable suggestions which have been made. At this stage, I do not intend to reduce the number of priests in the Geelong region. However, should such a reduction become necessary in the future then the suggestions made would be most helpful.”
- In March 2004, the final version was developed after a meeting, to refine the alternatives that involved Winchelsea, was held with parishioners at Winchelsea.

In summary the response by people in this process has been energetic, well informed and comprehensive. It has also been diverse, complex and difficult to assimilate. The responses have, however, been infused by some common values, which are identified below.

Shared Values

Coming out of the extensive consultation process it is clear that we share a desire to:

- Gather and worship in our local communities
- To celebrate Eucharist on Sunday (Saturday) in those communities
- To have a priest we know well and who knows us well
- To have an intense, organic relationship within the local community between the priest and the people

We have also brought to the process a willingness to change, great imagination and a sense of sacrifice in addressing the logistical barriers to perfect realisation of these values.

Shared Realities

It is, of course, impossible to avoid the restrictions that confront us. We have:

- 13 priests on appointment available in the Deanery, and this is likely to reduce in time
- 32 communities/Mass centres, plus schools, hostels, homes etc
- A parish structure that tends to constrain some solutions
- Some proposed approaches to the problem (*such as the appointment of married priests, whether already ordained or to be ordained, or of women priests etc.), are not within the current scope of this plan.

Timing and Scope

Communities are intensely interconnected organisms. Physical realities impact on spiritual, intellectual and emotional realities. And vice versa. In addressing these issues in the Deanery we have had a great variety of emphases on administrative, sacramental and pastoral issues. This plan attempts to cover all of those areas in as far as the Deanery is concerned, but is broken into three interconnected sections; sacramental services, pastoral services and administration services. It is driven by a desire to meet, in the best possible way, the spiritual and pastoral needs of our people.

The following proposal considers strategies to provide sacramental services in the face of some eventualities that may arise, and directions in pastoral services and administrative services that will best support those strategies. In coming to these strategies we have been mindful of previous experiences in which the Deanery lost the services of a priest and reacted quickly to cover the loss from within. E.g. the loss of Fr. G. Spillane as Parish Priest of Bell Park, and the subsequent establishment of the "Cluster", and the transfer of Fr. G. Fitzpatrick from Winchelsea Parish, and the subsequent appointment of Fr. W. Chuchala as Priest-in-charge, in addition to his duties as Hospital Chaplain. This plan allows us to be prepared if such events occur again.

Part A: Sacramental Services

The plan provides a way to move forward without having to make unnecessary changes immediately. It proposes strategies and directions at the most broad level practicable, leaving as much scope as possible for local decisions about operating with the available resources.

The plan does not formally account the wonderful work of the retired priests living in the Region. However, in defining these strategies and making maximum room for local decisions, we recognise that the continued work of retired priests will ease any transition to new arrangements and make available, at least for some time, important resources to our communities.

The plan lists the **appointments** in the Deanery in two groups: those appointments that must be retained (“key” appointments), and those whose responsibilities will be redirected in the event that we lose a priest and cannot replace him (“other” appointments)..

The grouping is based on asking this question: "If one priest leaves the Deanery (by transfer to another place, retirement, poor health or death) and cannot be replaced, what would be the most practical and achievable action to be taken to meet the need which arises. The answer to this question is, of course, only the start of the solution. Depending on which appointment is left vacant in the first instance, a number of reappointments of remaining priests to newly-structured appointments may be required.

Proposal in respect of Sacramental Services

The Geelong Deanery proposes that the Archbishop be advised of an assembly of individual strategies to be employed in the event that any one of the thirteen priests currently “on appointment” in the Geelong Deanery leaves his current assignment and there is no replacement to be found within the Archdiocese.

The strategy assumes that, in the event of any Parish losing its Parish Priest, then the usual process of “advertising” the parish would initially be followed.

“Key” Appointments

If the Parish Priest of any of the following parishes

- Geelong
- Belmont
- Corio
- The “cluster” of Bell Park, Manifold Heights and Geelong West.
- Meredith
- Queenscliff
- Drysdale

were to leave his current appointment and, after the usual process of “advertising” the parish, no replacement was to be found from elsewhere in the Archdiocese, then the Archbishop would invite one of the remaining six “other” priests on appointment to take up the vacant parish.

This would create a vacancy in the “other” appointments, which would be addressed as follows:

“Other” Appointments

Geelong Hospital Chaplain

If the Geelong Hospital Chaplain were to be moved, and no replacement appointment was made, we recommend the following strategy:

- A. Hospital Chaplaincy would be shared among the priests of Geelong, Geelong East, Belmont, the Cluster, Grovedale, Corio and Norlane (currently 9 priests) eg. Geelong takes 3 days per fortnight plus each week-end and night calls, others one day per fortnight.
- B. Anglesea would come under administration of the Grovedale Parish. One Mass would be retained there, the time of which would be decided within the parish.
- C. Winchelsea would come under administration of the Meredith parish. One Mass would be retained there, the time of which would be decided within the parish.
- D. Mt. Moriac would come under the administration of the Belmont parish. The availability of Mass would be decided within the parish.

Grovedale Parish Priest

If the Grovedale Parish Priest were to be moved, and no replacement appointment was made, we recommend the following strategy:

- A. Nazareth Parish (Grovedale / Torquay) would be extended to include Anglesea, and the Hospital Chaplain would take charge of the expanded parish. One Mass would be retained at Anglesea, the time of which would be decided within the parish.
- B. Winchelsea would come under the administration of the Meredith Parish. One Mass would be retained there, the time of which would be decided within the parish.
- C. Mt. Moriac would come under the administration of the Belmont Parish. The availability of Mass would be decided within the parish.
- D. Hospital Chaplaincy would be shared among the priests of Geelong, Geelong East, Belmont, the Cluster, Grovedale, Corio and Norlane (currently 9 priests) eg. Geelong takes 3 days per fortnight plus each week-end and night calls, others one day per fortnight.

Norlane Parish Priest

If the Norlane Parish Priest were to be moved, and no replacement appointment was made, we recommend the following strategy:

The Norlane parish would be clustered with the Corio Parish, and the decision as to Mass availability and other pastoral needs would be made within the expanded (Corio / Norlane) parish.

Geelong East Parish Priest

If the Geelong East Parish Priest were to be moved, and no replacement appointment was made, we recommend the following strategy:

The Geelong East parish would be clustered with the Geelong Parish, and the decision as to Mass availability and other pastoral needs would be made within the expanded (Geelong / Geelong East) parish.

Cluster Assistant Priest

If the Cluster (Geelong West, Manifold Heights and Bell Park) Assistant Priest were to be moved, and no replacement appointment was made, we recommend the following strategy:

The Cluster Parish would need to reduce weekend Masses according to the availability of “supply” priests. Chaplaincy to the Grace McKellar Centre should be shared, possibly with the Hospital Chaplain taking a more consolidated role.

Geelong Assistant Priest

If the Geelong Assistant Priest were to be moved, and no replacement appointment was made, we recommend the following strategy:

The Hospital Chaplain would move to a more involved role at St. Mary’s during the week, and would continue to assist at St. Mary’s with Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals. He would also assist with the “Fifth Sunday” Evening Mass. However, he would continue the current arrangement of Masses in the Anglesea Parish.

Whenever any one of the above eventualities occurs it will be necessary, having made the rearrangements proposed, to review all of the remaining strategies in the light of the new circumstances.

This is a draft document being circulated within the Geelong Deanery for comment and review prior to submission to the Archbishop as a formal proposal from the Geelong Deanery. Any decisions regarding the appointment of priests will be at the discretion of the Archbishop.

Part B: Pastoral Services

Even in the current circumstances there is potential to improve the level and kind of pastoral services available in the Deanery. Given the diversity of our communities and their circumstances, it is important, in these times of declining numbers of priests, that they all develop a real leadership capability ready to work collaboratively with the priests in meeting the needs of the people.

Pastoral Development

In the immediate future there is a need to continue to develop available pastoral services. It is important that this be done in a way that maximises the availability of priests for uniquely priestly services and facilitates the engagement of lay people in other service activities.

All of our communities currently have a "pastoral team" in one mode of operation or another. The functions of each team will vary depending on size, associations with other communities, local needs, geographic location, etc.

The Deanery encourages these existing teams to work with their priests to find new ways to enliven and enable their communities. But we also recognise that while there is no common model for parish/community organisation in the Archdiocese, there is also no common foundational basis for such organisation to be established.

Noting that:

- Community and parish organisations are massively varied.
- There is some value in that and some difficulty.
- There is the potential to support our people by providing appropriate help in developing pastoral support capability.
- Examples of this support exist.

Pastoral Leadership

There is a requirement for all priests in the Deanery to work with members of all of the communities within their appointments so as to develop an understanding of collaborative and consultative leadership. The Deanery encourages each community, within each parish, to establish positions of community leadership, whether that be within the current context of Parish Council, pastoral team or other existing structure or in adaptation of those.

In support of meeting those expectations the Deanery will continue and extend its work in pastoral formation. In particular the Deanery will establish and appropriately staff a "Pastoral Formation Group" that will provide tools, faculty and assistance to communities in the areas of:

- Defining community leadership roles.
- Building a formation faculty for all levels of lay ministry, including leadership formation.
- Coordinating the use of pastoral resources in the Deanery.
- Manage the employment and staff services of any remunerated lay ministers, including Pastoral Associates.

Other areas of lay formation that were identified as important in the recent survey were children's liturgies and school catechists. These will be priority areas in pastoral development and pastoral leadership in the Deanery.

Part C: Administrative Services

"Rationalise administrative tasks", has been one of the most common and powerful responses to our surveys. The devil, of course, is in the detail. We therefore propose a process, to begin as soon as possible, to effect sensible rationalisation over a period of time in specific areas of administration. Again, while it may become possible to set targets for this work, the emphasis will be on quality of solution. That is, solutions that build on and properly utilise **existing capability**, that fully respect the **rights of individuals currently active** in administrative tasks, that **meet legal requirements**, that **are cost effective** and that most **closely meet the needs** of the communities being served.

The proposed process has the following steps:

- List and regularly review the areas of work to be attended to.

For each area of work:

- Identify the people and resources currently being attended to the work in the Deanery
- Engage those people in the evaluation and decision making process
- Identify shortfalls in achievement, overlaps of work and excesses of resources
- Design solutions
- Implement

Clearly, where these steps are to be undertaken by a working group it is essential to include current practitioners in the working groups.

The following areas of work are currently identified as areas where improvements or efficiencies could be achieved:

- Property maintenance
- General office work
- Communication services Employment of Pastoral Associates
- Employment of lay ministers
- Property management and development

In the first instance Fr Kevin Dillon will form small teams to address these areas of work one or a few at a time. The appointment of "Project Managers" for specific areas will be most actively considered in order to reduce the workload on priests.