

Name of Parish

Suburb of Parish

*Name of your Parish Pastoral Plan
(Years covered by your Parish Pastoral Plan)*

Number and date of this version

A Parish Prayer (named as you like)

Gracious God, source of all life,
you call us together in faith and love
as the parish of [parish name]

As one body in Christ,
may we respond to your Word,
attend to the signs of the times,
and live as your disciples in word and deed.

Renew our hearts in your Holy Spirit
to grow and share our faith with the world;
give us courage and grace
to live faith in our future.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(NB: This is merely an example based on the prayer for the Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Parramatta which you can read at www.faithinourfuture.org.au. It is best that the parish write its own customised prayer reflecting the vision and aspirations of the community's faith as outlined in your Parish Plan e.g. it may include themes of unity, mission or outreach to families, service to the poor, or the parish priorities over the coming years, etc. We need to pray that our efforts will bear fruit trusting in God's support of our communities and their ministries. It is ideal that all parish groups use this same prayer in their gatherings, so that the common vision and aspirations of the parish as a whole is kept before all members and ministries of the parish)

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Why We Need to Plan (or 'Why Planning Matters' or similar)

I think it is important to include a brief explanation from the outset of *why* a parish plan is necessary at all. We cannot assume every parishioner understands *why* they need a parish plan (e.g. 'isn't prayer enough?').

This page could be written and signed by the Parish Priest which can help lend authority to the overall document and the philosophy of planning. Here are some basic reasons why parishes need to plan. You might add others that come to mind:

- Wanting to grow is not enough, we need to *plan* to grow as a parish
- Planning is something the Church has always done (see the Acts of the Apostles)
- We need to name our common vision or purpose for ourselves and also for others, outsiders, who want to know 'what we are about'
- We need to consult our people about their needs and gifts and respond to those qualities through organised and intentional actions
- We need to respond pro-actively to surrounding internal and external change
- We need to clarify areas where we can act and strengthen our community in practical ways
- We need to invite others into participation in mission and ministry and a parish plan can help us to invite them into action
- A parish plan gives our community a common language to talk about its present and God-given mission into the future
- We need to plan to the best community of faith we can be, using our resources wisely and responding to present and future needs creatively
- We need to plan so we can work together as one body in Christ

Our Parish Vision

Examples only:

The following vision articulates that creating disciples is the key goal of the parish and its activities, and that it is going to focus on formation and education in the years to come: **“St John’s Parish is committed to inviting and supporting every parishioner to become a disciple of Christ. Therefore our parish will provide formation and education to all Catholics who participate in our parish and reach out to those who are not yet doing so”**

The following vision articulates two key goals, growing and sharing the faith of the parish. To achieve these two goals it will concentrate on five concrete areas of pastoral life. The plan is for the next three years of the community’s life: **“Our vision for St John’s Parish is to grow in faith and share that faith with others. To achieve this we commit ourselves to growth and evangelisation in five key areas over the next three years. We commit to excellence in all that we do in the name of Jesus our Lord”**

Some parishes might choose to provide more detail as part of their Parish Vision, which for this sample parish plan, would look something like this:

“The five key areas of growth and evangelisation for our parish are:

- Families
- Youth
- Ethnic diversity
- Faith formation
- Outreach to the Unchurched

The following pages of our parish plan name the strategies and actions we have discerned as a community to respond to these areas and so grow and share the faith of [parish name]”

Goal 1: Family Life

(NB: some parishes may choose to insert some explanatory text here about the goal of “Family Life” to make it clearer why this goal was chosen e.g. “After consultation with our people, there was a strong consensus that our parish can better support our families in faith, recognising families as the cornerstone of our Church and society”. This explanatory text can be included for the goals that follow on subsequent pages)

Strategies	Actions	Time Frame	Who	Outcomes
1.1 Welcome newcomers with genuine hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all parishioners at every Mass to welcome visitors and invite them to regular morning tea after Sunday morning masses • Educate our people about what welcome involves, to discuss opportunities to improve hospitality, and the things that impede a sense of belonging • Strengthen connection with parish schools to be aware of new families in the area and reach out to these families with more consistency 	Jan-Jun 2015 with review of progress	The existing welcome team, led by A. Smith. New members for this welcome team will be recruited in the remaining months of 2014 before the actions begin in Jan 2015.	This column is purposely left blank throughout the pastoral plan, and appears simply to indicate that a review of progress will be conducted periodically.
1.2 Improve our focus on the needs of the elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint a coordinator (volunteer) to oversee parish support of the elderly • Review current social and spiritual activities made available to elderly parishioners, reviewing transport to Masses and groups in particular and any other needs that are discerned • Introduce a healing Mass once a month at a time and location that suits the fragile aged in our parish and surrounds 	Jul-Dec 2015	Parish priest and team to discern a fitting coordinator for this area of ministry, in consultation with the aged Catholics of the parish. The parish also to discuss potential initiatives with CatholicCare	
1.3				

NB: Your parish may have several pages of strategies and actions which it has discussed and agreed to over the three years of its plan. This sample plan assumes only three strategies have been agreed to in each of the five areas of focus: family life, youth, ethnic diversity, faith formation and outreach to the unchurched.

Goal 2: Youth

Strategies	Actions	Time Frame	Who	Outcomes
2.1				
2.2				
2.3				

Goal 3: Ethnic Diversity

Strategies	Actions	Time Frame	Who	Outcomes
3.1				
3.2				
3.3				

Goal 4: Faith Formation

Strategies	Actions	Time Frame	Who	Outcomes
4.1				
4.2				
4.3				

Goal 5: Outreach to the Unchurched

Strategies	Actions	Time Frame	Who	Outcomes
5.1				
5.2				
5.3				

Reviewing Our Progress

On this page, the parish leaders can articulate how they plan to review the progress of the parish in achieving the goals, strategies and actions outlined in the previous pages. Outlining how a community plans to track and review its progress is important as it gives parishioners confidence that the Parish Pastoral Plan is a serious undertaking and a working document to which the whole community is committed. An example may look something like this:

“The Parish Pastoral Council of [Name of Parish] commits itself under the leadership of [Name of Parish Priest] to reviewing the progress of our goals, strategies and actions twice a year, in [Name of Month] and [Name of Month] each year in collaboration with the leaders of ministry groups named as responsible for each action. Progress reports will be shared through the parish bulletin and parish website and the achievements and progress of the groups will also be shared at the parish AGM held on [Name of month or date if this is at hand]”

Please note that the overall framework of this sample Parish Plan is *only a suggestion* and local parishes can likely improve this basic plan substantially, drawing on the wisdom and expertise of its members. It is important to keep in mind that in our pews each weekend are gifted people with planning and professional experience that can be brought to bear on the life, mission and planning of our parishes. It is also important to recognise that the process of parish planning is not about arriving at a document such as this, but using the *process* of developing such a document as a pretext to ask people to get involved and contribute to the future life of the community. By consulting your community about what might go into such a plan as this, by sharing the parish vision when it is finally arrived at, and by naming actions and asking new and existing parishioners if they would like to assist in bringing specific actions of the parish plan to life, the parish planning process becomes a great opportunity for fostering participation and evangelisation.

With best wishes in your parish planning, Daniel Ang

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