

# Amalgamation and renewal process

## Overview of the process

The community engagement process has been designed to support the amalgamation and renewal of parishes in the greater Bayside area. The goal of the process is to form a new community where everyone living in the existing parishes can feel they belong. Drawing on Pope Francis' vision for the Synod on Synodality, the process invites you to learn to come together and, attentive to the Holy Spirit, be drawn beyond the differences and ideological boundaries that tend to polarise to find unity in diversity. As outlined in Figure 1, the process recognises both personal and group discernment will be important to achieving this outcome.

We tend to think of discernment as the same as decision-making and often, perhaps unintentionally, enter the process with a list of issues we want addressed or solutions we want to impose. But discernment is more than a matter of reason. It involves every aspect of the person from emotion to analysis, from desire to resistance, from personal will to personal prayer. It invites us to see things through the eyes of the other and to listen to the wisdom of the Spirit deep within us.

### PHASE 1 Forming community

Knowing one another is a pre-condition to forming community hence, in the first phase, you are encouraged to find ways to meet people you don't know, don't know well, or wouldn't normally talk to. You are also invited to find time to be quiet and listen – as the Rule of St Benedict says – with the 'ears of your heart'. Jay McDaniel describes this kind of listening as an act of generously listening to the world and to God with a mindful and loving heart, unfettered by internal chatter, personal ambition, hidden agendas and personal prejudice. Although these two activities are the focus for the first phase, you are invited to continue them throughout the process and beyond as they will continue to be of benefit.

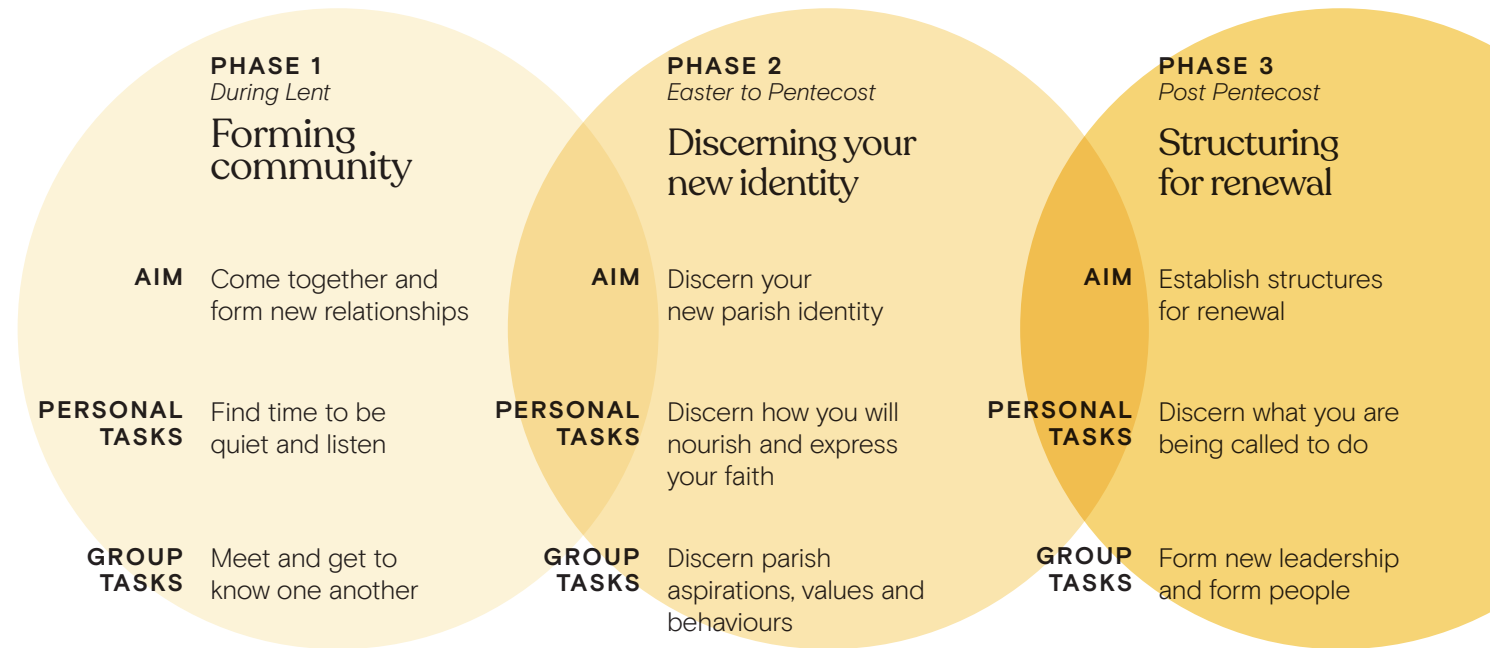


Figure 1: Community Engagement Phases

### PHASE 2 Discerning your new identity

Phase 2 involves discernment of the characteristics of the new community identity. Individually you are invited to consider how, in a transformative way, you are being called into and by faith, hope and love. The fruits of your personal discernment will be an important input into the two group discernment sessions to be held in late April/early May. The first group session will focus on the shared aspirations for your new community, and the second on the values and behaviours that will underpin how the community will function. You are invited to attend either or both sessions. The fruits of these two group discernment sessions will be used as criteria to select the preferred name and charism to animate the community you aspire to become. The shortlist of names will be submitted to Archbishop Peter at Pentecost.

### PHASE 3 Structuring for renewal

In Phase 3, the structures to support renewal will be progressively put in place. A new parish leadership team will be formed to oversee the translation of the Phase 2 group discernment into the new parish vision and values and develop a pastoral plan to enliven each new community. As we have different skills and spiritual gifts, the personal discernment question in Phase 3 is 'how am I being called to serve?'. Whether in leadership or ministry, God's grace and invitation is offered to everyone. Together, we are the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). Promulgation of the Decree of Amalgamation will mark the end of the third phase of this process and the formal beginning of the new parish communities. With the new structures in place, the journey to become vibrant, vital and viable communities of faith will continue.