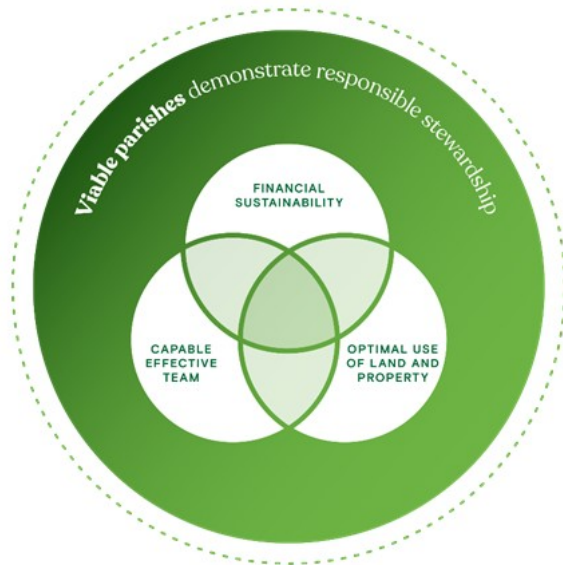
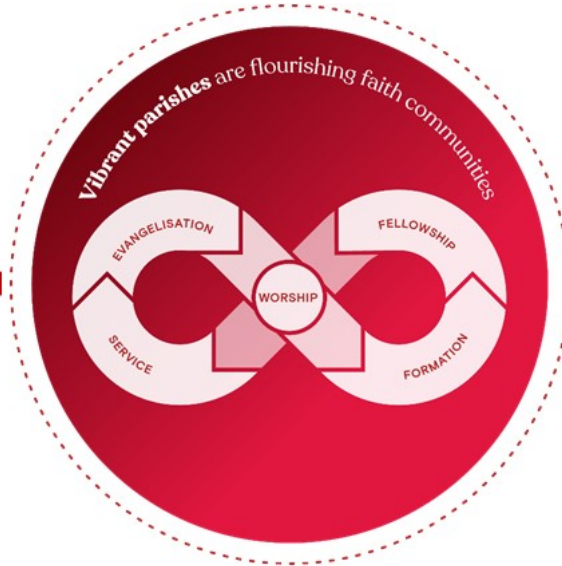


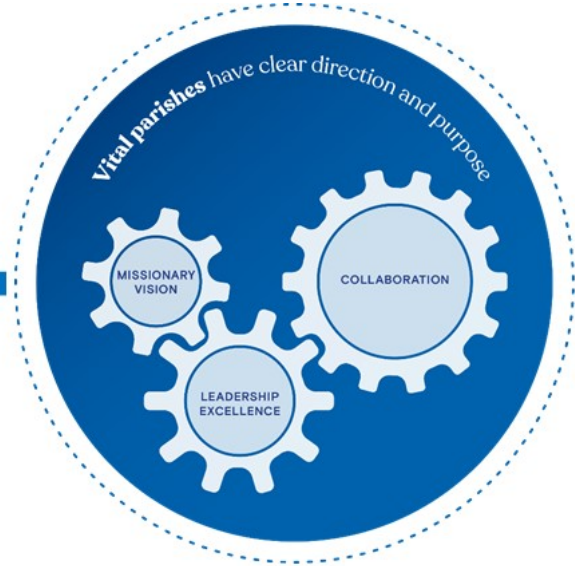
FROM MAINTENANCE TO MISSIONARY RENEWAL



Focus on financial sustainability
maximizing income and
managing expenses



Focus on parish community
encouraging fellowship,
formation and service



Focus on whole community
reaching out to find new
points of connection



Maintenance

Missionary Renewal

STORIES FROM THE FUTURE...

1. FOCUS ON VIABILITY ALONE

When I was young, Church was at the centre of my family life. I think pretty much everyone I knew was Catholic. My classmates and I learned together, prayed together, played sport together and socialised together. Their sisters and brothers were similar ages to mine and our parents were friends too, so it was like one big tribe. There was a connection, something we had in common, a bond that joined us together.

I don't know when or why I started drifting away from Church. Maybe I just got busy with other things. For a long time I still used to go to Mass at Christmas and Easter. I loved the ritual and solemnity of the celebration. The Church was well kept and the gardens were beautiful but, I don't know, I just didn't feel any connection to the people there. No-one said hello to me and they hardly even spoke to each other, so I didn't feel I was missing out on anything by not being part of the parish community.

I still live by Catholic values and always tick 'Catholic' on the census form. I miss my Catholic tribe and wish my kids had had a chance to have that experience. But at the end of the day I think being true to yourself and your values is the most important thing.

2. FOCUS ON FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND VIBRANCY

I was part of the lucky generation of kids to be taught by religious sisters. Sometimes when I watched them praying together in the Chapel I wondered what their lives were like. I admired the courage it must have taken to give up the chance to have your own family and devote your life to serving God.

But that path was not for me. I married in my mid-twenties and have six children, 15 grandchildren and my first great grandchild is due any day now. I wish my husband was here to share the joy but he died 10 years ago. My kids live quite far away so I'm very grateful for my caring parish community. I love the cuppa after Mass and the monthly senior ladies lunches. They've really helped me get to know others my age. Some of the others are part of the social justice action group but I prefer going to the weekly prayer and bible study group. It's a wonderful way to share and grow in faith. We organise the Lenten and Advent program for the rest of the parish. I particularly love those two times of the Church year as that's when we come together to celebrate as a whole parish community.

I worry that Catholic kids today – my grandchildren included – are not part of a parish community. Their main connection to Church is through school. Although the school has a strong commitment to faith development, most of their teachers don't go to Mass regularly and some never go at all. We've talked about this a lot in our parish. We feel diminished without them and, despite all the good things we are doing, it's sometimes hard to remain hopeful for the future.

3. FOCUS ON FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND VIBRANCY WITH A MISSIONARY VISION

The last few years haven't been easy but life is so different now. I can't remember exactly how it all began. It might have been when someone suggested we collaborate with the neighbouring parish to buy a food truck. We were skeptical (to say the least) about the idea but, with a leap of faith, our cuppa-after-Mass became mobile!

We started taking the truck to the primary school a couple of mornings each week. The mums and occasional dads appreciated the chance to stop and socialise together and it helped us get to know them. Although it hasn't worked out exactly how we thought it would, we can feel a bond is growing between us.

One mum asked me if I could be a proxy granny to her children. I don't have children of my own and it's brought me such great joy. I asked if we could go to their class Masses together. She said she was too embarrassed to go because she couldn't remember the responses. That was easy to fix! Now they come with me to Mass at Christmas and Easter. Our church is packed then, and I pray the experience of a vibrant parish community helps them connect to their Catholic identity.

Our parish community is still small but we're involved in so many things it feels so much more dynamic and, I don't know, real! If we'd worried back then about where we'd find the time and the people, I don't think we would have started. But now at the end of Mass when Father says "go and announce the Gospel of the Lord", we know exactly how we will do it in the coming week. And we respond whole-heartedly "thanks be to God".