

# Parish Stewardship Program

## Opening Address by Mr Paul Docherty, Chairman, Hawthorn Parish Council

Good evening, everyone.

Every three years we run a Stewardship Program, which helps us review everything that we do as a parish community. We are one of only a few parishes which does this every three years, and has done it subsequently over the last four cycles. And while it's important that we review everything that we do, and as a parish we do simple things like renew our database, and ask our parishioners if they would like to be involved as volunteers in our programs, and we ask you to help us to continue to build our parish community, it's also an important time to reflect on what we actually do day to day in this community.

And although it's easy to assume what our Parish is made up of, basically our church here, the Immaculate Conception, our church down at St Joseph's Mews, to our flourishing school on Glenferrie Road, St Joseph's Primary, and to the daily work we do in outreach, it's an extraordinary community group that you are a part of by being here today. And we need you.

I was given a template letter to read to you from the Archdiocese, which is something that kicks off the Stewardship Program, but I've sort of thrown that away and written my own note about the things I think are important to focus on for our community. And the simplest way to do this is to try and list some of those parish and community activities, in no particular priority.

We have an enormous Parent-Child Sacramental Faith Development; Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, the list goes on. This is not just for our Parish, but for numerous surrounding parishes. Our Youth Engagement Program (YEP) which involves a number of parishes and schools in our area, a program started as a result of a very similar strategic review as the one we are commencing. Our YEP program is one of the most successful youth programs in the country. The Youth Engagement Program meet as a youth group regularly, have sleepouts with hundreds of participants, prayer nights, they travel together, and learn and perform outreach, and we have dedicated full-time resource making sure this happens.

The work of St Vincent de Paul in Hawthorn and their outreach to the poor and homeless, not just in our community, but in places like Prahran and St Kilda. It's absolutely extraordinary to hear their stories and a privilege of our people who serve in our community.

We do visitations to local nursing homes with Communion and prayer and often simply just to be there.

We perform school Masses for every class at St Joseph's and we are intimately involved in the faith direction of our teachers and our students.

We have a Women's Night here in the church. It is held here simply because of the size and scale of the event. We have Long Table Dinners in our Parish Centre. We put on Christmas Lunch for those less fortunate. Every week we have baptisms, weddings and funerals. And every day, there are many, many people who knock on the doors of our Parish Office and our Presbytery, mostly those less fortunate than we are. We have monthly craft get-togethers for our elderly.

We have developed a school and church choir at our 9:30am Mass and have an enormous musical program across both our churches and our school, and we have just completed an Ignatian Spirituality retreat at Campion.

The St Joseph's Mews community, which is just down the road, have initiated many activities, including special Masses, music and a number of other events. And this year, a group of our parishioners are organising celebrations for the 150 years of the Parish community and this church serving Hawthorn, and you'll have seen the updates in the notices each week.

We are involved in the Parish with our links to the Jesuits, the Jesuit Mission, Jesuit Social Services, and just this weekend, the Maytime Fair raising money for Jesuit Mission, meaning our outreach is both local and international.

Our constant goal is pastoral care. It's often the things that are hard to see, but we know our parish staff, our clergy, our volunteers and all of our parishioners are engaged every single day in helping the less fortunate.

This list goes on and on. So we are all part of something very special – an extraordinary community, and over the next few weekends, we will be looking at the different areas of our Parish and what it means for us to be part of parish family. The different weekends will focus on our Faith, our Community, and our Future and there will be a number of speakers and handouts.

The Program leadership team and parish need your support and involvement in the program. It's an important time in the life of our Parish, a time of renewal and recommitment, and I can just personally say that although I understand that if you've been through this before, you may ask why are we doing this again? And I can tell you that the ongoing work we are doing, the community we are continuing to build is blessed by the fact that we can do this program every few years, that we do get an opportunity to reflect on what we are here for, and we renew our commitment and Faith to our Church and to the Hawthorn community.

There will be an important meeting, our "Parish Future Forum", which will be held on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May at 7:30pm in the Parish Centre and all parishioners are invited to attend that meeting.

I thank you again for being here, for being a part of our Parish and parish community, and committing to a vibrant future.

*Note: Due to the large number of responses, the venue for the "Parish Future Forum" has been changed from the Parish Centre to the Immaculate Conception Church.*