

## Parishes as Centres of Service – a 2016 Christmas Update

To Participants in the August 2016 "Reimagining Parish Services Expo"

Dear friends

As 2016 draws to a close, this note is to follow up on the **Reimagining Parish Services Expo**.

On 27 August 2016 more than 100 parishioners and several priests gathered at Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Cheltenham for the "Reimagining Parish Services Expo". Leaders from more than 15 parishes in the South Easter corridor and social service agencies exhibited a diverse range of services. Fr John Petrulis, parish priest St Kilda/Elwood parish which includes the Sacred Heart Mission led the speakers program, which included speakers from Carnegie and Mornington parishes.

Fr John encouraged parishioners to take the time to notice what's going on in their local communities. 'Fr Ernie (who started Sacred Heart Mission in 1982) and the early workers began by walking the streets and listening, and noticing things. They started to notice the reality of people's lives and to respond as they could at that time'.

Following the presentations, the expo provided an opportunity for all gathered to showcase their services and to interact with each other. Comments were overwhelmingly positive, including "Fantastic to hear what different parishes are doing", "There is so much going on, so many areas where one can become involved - very insightful", as well as many great suggestions for the future.

Planning is now underway for a similar event at **St Francis Xavier's Parish, Montmorency for Saturday 6 May**, with others in mind for the west and east of Melbourne later in 2017.

**Webpage and Newsletter** We have established a webpage at [www.css.org.au/Parishes](http://www.css.org.au/Parishes) to provide you with information on the Reimagining Parishes program, and will issue a quarterly update to parishes regarding events, resources, etc.

**Volunteering Opportunities:** [www.css.org.au/Portals/51/Volunteering\\_Opportunities\\_5Dec2016.pdf](http://www.css.org.au/Portals/51/Volunteering_Opportunities_5Dec2016.pdf) lists a large range of Catholic organisations who engage volunteers in much needed support activities.

'**Building Stronger Parishes**', a major research project by the Australian Catholic Bishop Conference's Pastoral Research Office, explores how Catholic parishes, in various contexts, use their strengths and available resources to respond to a variety of challenges. Recommended for parish priests, parish associates and parish council leaders, at [www.css.org.au/Parishes/Article/21099/Building-Stronger-Parishes-Information-and-Resources#.WFelMX2s-Sp](http://www.css.org.au/Parishes/Article/21099/Building-Stronger-Parishes-Information-and-Resources#.WFelMX2s-Sp)

**Christmas Message:** Thanks to Fr Andy Hamilton sj for his recent Christmas [reflection](#) on the challenges faced by people around the world:

"We may give up our hopes for a just and peaceful world, retire from it as gracefully as we can, accept the victory of power, wealth and brutality, and allow hope to die within us. Or we can return to the Christmas story and to the hope that is central to it, and work and pray for the death of the new political order. This is the path of constancy, of faithfulness to little people in small things, of being a midwife in the hard labours of a Birth ..."

Christmas greetings to all, with thanks for the work on so many fronts over the past year to build a more just and compassionate society,



*From all at  
Catholic Social Services Victoria,  
we wish you a blessed and holy Christmas  
and holiday season,  
and a safe and happy New Year.  
With thanks!*