

MISSION MAP

Mata kaupapa Mihana

What we seek in a parish

During the Mission Momentum sessions held across the diocese in the later part of 2022 participants were asked to consider what happened in a vibrant life-giving parish community and what happened or didn't happen in parish communities that were less life-giving.

Great energy evolved from the process and the following were repeatedly noted as signs of a vibrant life-giving parish community.

- A welcoming environment, hospitality is paramount.
- Good music that encourages participation.
- People feel that they are part of the celebration and not just having Mass 'done to them.'
- Needs of people are noted and they are helped.
- Liturgy of the Word for children offered.
- Intergenerational community. Presence of families, young people – a mix of cultures.
- Disabled are welcome and spaces/liturgy are accessible.
- Good communication. People know what is happening and what is available.
- Sacraments are celebrations.
- People are excited about coming to Church and being together.
- Liturgies including Mass occur throughout the week.
- Different groups gather for different needs, there is space available to do so. Groups also meet in homes.
- The Church is open outside Mass times for prayer and reflection.
- Local school is part of the parish not an added extra. Strong school/parish connections.
- Gatherings and activities that appeal to families are held.
- Parish has a presence outside of itself within the wider community.
- Justice & peace groups encourage engagement with the needs of the 'other.'
- Faith formation is ongoing and not just centred on sacramental preparation.

With respect to things missing in faith communities that were less life-giving again there were repeated threads.

- Unwelcoming community. Nobody is interested in the other
- Music either non-existent, inaccessible, archaic, or the choir performs without encouraging participation.
- No joy in the liturgy.
- Lack of diversity of age, culture, family status.
- Poor quality PowerPoint.
- Homilies that are too long, or not relevant, or about the priest not the Word.
- Not able to access the Church except for Mass.
- Nothing happens other than weekend worship.
- People don't have a say. Leadership is limited to the few who do everything and are not willing to change ways or methods or listen to new ideas.
- Nothing to engage young people such as youth groups.
- Disconnect between school and parish.

- Mass is all about sin and negativity with little sign of the 'Joy of the Gospel'.
- Unmaintained spaces and/or lack of gathering space other than sacred space. Minimal accessible parking.
- Fractions in the community, gossip.
- Little or no outreach.
- Sacraments (including Sunday Mass) about compliance rather than relationship with God and gathering as community.
- Constant requests for money especially when there is little accountability.
- No celebrational aspect of community life.
- Communication lacking, lack of use of modern technology and modes of engagement.

Recognising that many parishes are a mix of things going well and 'room for improvement' these discussions led to a reflection on key aspects of a parish life that nurture. The key aspects identified across all sessions were:

- All people are welcomed to the table of the Lord. Welcoming attitude by all members of the community is paramount.
- The parish is recognised as a community of engaged friend, people want to be there
- Many people participate in ministry and service not just the elite few
- Co-responsibility participation with shared collaborative leadership
- Emphasis on reaching out to new people and the absent.
- Priest knows the people.
- Creating a sense of belonging.
- A homily that unpacks the Word and is relevant to daily life (and is not too long).
- Formation of a listening community that seeks to discern its life rather than just respond.
- Gathering in a place where people can come as they are into a nurturing, relatable, vibrant community that brings them into a relationship with Jesus and each other.
- Connection is paramount. With the faith communities and people and people with each other. Connection needs to be intentional.

It is interesting to note that these reflections mirrored what was heard during the diocesan phase of the Synod on Synodality.