

PROCLAIM  
2016



*On a Mission of Mercy: Evangelising Parishes*



**MIND THE GAP: CONNECTING THE PARISH & SCHOOL FOR CHRIST-CENTRED MISSION**

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**Workshop Abstract**

The relationship between the parish and school represents one of the greatest opportunities for evangelisation in the Australian context. Growing relationships and connections at various levels of parish and school life has been the key ingredient in the story of St Brigid's, Marrickville. Fr John and Paige will share the story of this Christ-centred and Eucharistic community, identify several principles to grow the parish-school connection while acknowledging those titles, roles and factors that can impede our working together as Church. Participants will be invited to reflect on the potential of leadership in this collaborative relationship and also to consider their own success stories and challenges in building up parish and school communities in the unity of Christ's mission.



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## MIND THE GAP: CONNECTING THE PARISH & SCHOOL FOR CHRIST-CENTRED MISSION

### Part A: Introductions

#### 1. Welcome & Introductions

- Metaphors and images: Bridge, Open Door, Welcome. Events, Smell the Barby, Plate of Cakes, Glass of Wine, Cups of Coffee, Invitation.
- Value of sharing story: listen, share, feed the people.

#### 2. Porcupines:

- There is a need for all of us, schools and parishes, to work closely, to celebrate relationship, and to find the right distance between us.
- The gap widens and shrinks depending on our needs at the time.
- If we, like the porcupines, accept the odd prickle from our neighbour, our communities will thrive and be happier places, more resilient and able to do the great work that is ahead of us every day.

#### 3. Relational Meeting/Encounter

- Name moments of connection between your parish and school.

### Part B: Presentation

#### 4. Our Context:

- Inner West location, growing in density in the next 10 years.
- Mixed and changing cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Significant Catholic & Orthodox population.
- Significant “No Religion” amongst the wider population.
- Politically swinging from Labor to Greens and back (for now).

#### 5. Mission of Mercy through Evangelisation

- Mercy is ... “Blest are the merciful, for it is mercy that shall be shown to those who show mercy ... Cast away your fear and have faith, give your cares to the Lord and trust in him for he is risen. The Lord your God is alive.” (WYD16) .... Mercy is giving yourself a fair go, mercy for others, mercy for yourself.

#### 6. Evangelisation is ...

- ACBC Media (4/8/16) introduced the new Director for the National Centre for Evangelisation: “Shane’s gifts and his experience ... will make him a creative and empowering presence in the position, helping dioceses, communities and individuals **to discover more of Jesus Christ and take up the great task of proclaiming his Good News in fresh ways.**”

#### 7. Our Common Meeting Points

- Prayer in all its diverse forms
- Sacraments of Initiation, preparation and celebration
- Sunday & weekday Eucharist, Marriages & Funerals



## 8. Sacraments: It's All About Family

- Sacrament preparation is parish based, Sydney CCD Programme.
- Sacrament Team: parents from school/parish, and Parish team.
- Starts with encouraging both individual and family prayer.
- Valued added through community artworks, craft, song and story.

## 9. Sacraments: It's All About Family

- Many hands, many eyes, many voices, a level for people to connect.
- Respecting the addition of culture and our connection to Church.
- For those trying something out for the first time in years, or ticking the box, we have found a level of engagement that is comfortable and with just enough to stretch things a little further.

## 10. a. Sacraments: It's All About Family

- Programme continues annually
- We don't turn people away, just because they miss a session.
- We leave it in God's hand.
- We want them to leave us feeling they are very welcome.
- Some have left state schools and joined our school community.

## 10. b. Sacraments: It's All About Family

- People of every type: Families, Children & Youth, Singles, many Seniors (baby boomers), LGBTIQ, Abled and Disabled, First Nations, Convicts, Migrants, Refugees, and descendants.
- **These are Our People.** Take them where they're at, and help them grow a little more in faith, otherwise we will lose them. People rarely move to another Parish anymore. They now walk away!
- **RC** = Recovering Catholic! Retired Catholic!
- **You're needed here!** I'm needed here! I've got something to do!
- **Parish has to make connections.** We need volunteers (ministers) as they come and go. Our vocation is to serve.

## 11. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- **Family Educator** at St Brigid's for 6 years, a pilot school.
- Role: to nurture strong and meaningful parish/parent/school relationships & to explore new models of supporting the spiritual, social and educational formation of families.
- It thrives at Marrickville because of the fluid exchange between Parish and School, with initiatives often crossing between the two.
- Relationships are the premise of all our interactions.
- Parish Staff are visible, central & active, formally & informally.

## 12. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- **Recent Mercy Day:** "Mercy Tree" kits, liturgy in school yard & garden, picnic lunch for the families, Gift of Bread van,
- School is visible and central and active in Parish through Family Masses, attendance of staff at Sacrament Retreat Days & Celebrations, & shared initiatives.
- Growing community through fostering belonging and a larger sense of daily life as sacrament.

## 13. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- Parish Commitment to Asylum Seeker Centre for year of Mercy.
- Year 4's writing to children seeking Asylum



#### 14. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- It's important to say that though each of us is clear about our roles, that the result starts to take on a very united feel. And it's in each of us understanding the boundaries of our roles, that we actually connect. We are porcupines!
- When we go beyond our gates, firm in our understanding of ourselves as one community, we stop seeing ourselves as individual entities.
- We delight in blurring the boundaries between us, using very targeted and deliberate strategies. We lose our "kingdoms" on purpose and work for the same end, the same "Kingdom".
- So at any given time you may see parishioner, orthodox school family, a Catholic priest and school staff all working on the farm in Orchard Hills, with the Cana Community. All welcome literally means "all welcome"!
- Connections between Youth Ministry Co-ordinator (Casimir College) & Parish PA for Youth is a work in progress.
- Working with families, multi-generational connections.

#### 15. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- Cana Farm Day
- SPAR & Cards: everyone loves something for free
- School Mass 2 times a term
- Social Justice Outreach: Cana Farm Day, Mini Vinnies, Gift of Bread

#### 16. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- Gratitude Project: The lepers went away. One came back. "Thanks".
- "Be the One" ... raising the awareness of wellbeing and the spiritual benefits of gratitude.

#### 17. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- **Social Media:** Our Parish FaceBook Page "St Brigid's Marrickville" now has 1,186 people who like us. Some have unfriended us, but we are up there still.
- A great tool for evangelisation, getting a faith message out, since they "like" and send it on to others. We share stories of Church and faith and hope that come on our screens.
- Each day we try to put something out there, re-gifted from another Church agency, Vatican, News Source, or our own Stories.

#### 18. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- See a Blessing. Be a Blessing. Be God's Blessing

#### 19. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- Blessing Bags sent home to school and sacrament families, returned with 1500 reasons to be grateful and all displayed.

#### 20. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- Unplugged Project ... , switch off all eDevices for 12 hrs from 6pm.
- Celebration of Cultures ... every year to share food and showcase children's performing arts.
- P&F Events
- Mum's Retreat (Get away!)



## 21. Our Parish Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- **Casimir College**
  - Year level Reconciliation (T1) & Eucharist (T2,3,4)
  - whole school Mass once a Term.
  - social justice outreach opportunities: No hands but mine; Young Vinnies; Gift of Bread.
  - **State Schools Ministry**
- **CCD Co-ordinator** across 5 primary schools
  - Sacrament Cards and letters on sacraments sent via catechists
- **Growing connections with the Greek Orthodox Church**
  - Started with Primary School Assembly and coffee 6 years ago; priests share coffee and lunch some times; invite to College Mass.
  - Challenge: our kids are friends, our families are friends, why can't our priests and **churches be friends!**
- **Parish Staff**
  - Men and women, complimentary gifts, support each other.
- **Open Door Policy**
  - Serve the clients' needs first, make every contact a winner.
- **A Wedding Church**
  - Marriage prep a first encounter with a priest for many
  - They may want to come back for more.
  - Babies and Baptism usually follow later.
  - Yes! They will come late!!!
- **Liturgy**
  - (Usually) Good Music, (Usually) Good Liturgy, (Usually) Good short homily (yes. The they may want to come back for more)
  - Encourage participation through cultural and linguistic expression & a wide variety of groups.
  - Finish in 50 mins!

## 22. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- **Building Relationship**
  - **Passionist Family Groups:** we have 8 active groups, some old and smaller, others new and enlivened by the kids.
  - **Big events** engage people, yes, Christmas & Easter, also, Carols on the lawns in December, recent ordinations
  - **Gardening** together in the church grounds.
  - **Children's Liturgy** of the Word (when young families appear)
  - **Youth & Young Adults:** Surprise Pizza after WYD Mass. Regular activities.
  - **Seniors Club**, monthly afternoon tea, monthly bus trip
  - **Men's Club** (1st Friday) on property or the pub.
  - **Casimir College** students engaged in sorting bread on Friday nights at Gift of Bread, and work in the broader community.
  - **Justice & Peace** actions, with learnings from engagement in Sydney Alliance, and working across a number of platforms.
  - **School Activities** for families
  - **Volunteers** are builders of the community, so always say yes.



### 23. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- **Building Relationships.**
- Sometimes it's just having the courage to ask people to come with you to something that might mean a lot.
- We took 53 parishioners to Sydney Town Hall for the Launch of the Sydney Alliance. The Lime Green scarfs made us outstanding, easy to find in the middle of the hall.
- It was inspiring. We got a new Pastoral Council from it.

### 24. Our Parish & Schools as Evangelising & Missionary Platforms

- **Never Alone**
  - Engagement in & Leadership of Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations
  - Local Council partnerships
  - Sydney Alliance, partners with other faith communities, Unions, Community Groups (NGO's)
- **We Can't Afford It!**
  - Building connections is our core business
  - Fun Raising precedes Fund Raising
  - No room for my stuff/your stuff. Share it, all winners.
  - Twin with the neighbours! Partners not competitors!

### 25. Mind the Gap: Connect the Dots

- Don't beat up on yourself.
- You're probably doing similar or more already.
- Connect the dots, tick the boxes, Name Claim & Celebrate.
- Relationships are the beginning and end of good ministry, ie, relationship with God and each other.

## Part C: Relational Triads

### 26. Conversations in Groups of 3

- How does your Parish and School(s) work in partnership?
- What does Mercy and/or Evangelisation look like?

### 27. I Confess ...

- Share Story of your treasures. Let's affirm we're doing good!

### 28. Homework

- It might look messy, but hey, there's can be a lot of pleasure in building the kingdom together and with the Lord.

### 29. Homework

- Go Home to Parish/School and map all your success stories.
- Invite others to participate, they will see something you missed.
- Circle the Wagons, light a fire, open a bottle, share a Prayer of Thanksgiving, sing a song, celebrate this with your community.

### 30. Homework

- Let our common faith in Jesus, who walked, talked, listened, suffered, died, rose, be your firm foundation.
- Now build on it.





## Part D: Conclusion

### 31. Conclusion

- **Connecting Parish and School** is not hard, but it takes time and commitment. You have to keep working at it.
- **Mind the Gap:** It's always there, and can be a good thing, but it doesn't have to define us. The bridge defines us, and the journeys we make to and fro across it.
- **Have Faith:** The Lord is with us on the journey
- **Have Hope:** It's not as bad as you might think. Good things will happen if you work at it.
- **Have Love:** God loves you! The people love you! You should love you! Be encouraged. Encourage one another.

### 32. Thank You

- **Thank you for Dreaming Big** ... the Connections are happening
- **Take a Show Bag** home with you ... find a treasure for yourself
- As they say at Casimir & Lasallian Schools in their Prayer Mantra ... **Live Jesus in your heart forever.**

**Be A Blessing** by David Hass in *God is Everywhere*.

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**Be a blessing to yourselves, be a blessing to the world, for each other a covenant of love. Be a blessing with your heart, be a blessing with your lives, in communion with God.**

**Find love in the food and feed each other;** find love in the food of love and grace; find love in the food of forgiveness and mercy; be a blessing, be a blessing.

**Find love in the food and heal each other;** find love in the food of light and good; find love in the food of new and fresh beginnings: be a blessing, be a blessing.

**Find love in the food, and serve each other;** find love in the food of faith and hope; find love in the food of righteousness and justice: be a blessing, be a blessing.

### St Brigid's Marrickville

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*Sharing the Story of St Brigid's Parish,  
St Brigid's Catholic School & Casimir Catholic College*

