

PARISH ASSEMBLY REPORT 2025

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead”.

James 2:17



Creator God, King of the universe. We hear your call to gather in your name so we may listen and respond as your adopted children.

Through sharing, discerning the movements of the Holy Spirit for our parish. As we gather in unison for our Parish Assembly open our ears that we hear YOUR WORD so our parish may continue to be a light for all to see.

Open our hearts and help us to listen to each other with humility and empathy.

As we make our way THROUGH these days, guide and shape us so that our minds and hearts reflect your will. Help us to continue to build a Parish that is vibrant, evangelising and missionary. Amen

ADELAIDE HILLS CATHOLIC PARISH

19th OCTOBER 2025

The Voice of Our Parish: Assembly Reflection Summary

The parish assembly has illuminated both the richness of our community and the opportunities for deeper engagement, reflecting the call of James 2:17 to put faith into action.

Guided by the Spirit, we recognise that the Church is not built by one but by many, each offering unique gifts to serve Christ in our midst (1 Corinthians 12:27). Across the themes of the future of our parish, synodality, volunteering, and community engagement, it is clear that while many parishioners are willing to serve, proactive and structured opportunities are needed to harness gifts, build connections, and nurture belonging.

By embracing synodality, we commit to walking together in faith, listening for Christ in one another, and ensuring that our dialogue leads to prayerful action. Through intentional volunteering and pastoral care, we cultivate spiritual growth, joy, and relationships, particularly by engaging young people and newcomers, recognising that every act of service is a participation in Christ's mission.

Strengthening community engagement—linking parish, school, and local networks—enables us to manifest Christ's love in our neighborhoods, creating a parish that moves from attending to belonging, from intention to action, and from gathering to mission, as a living, Spirit-filled Body of Christ.

Theme: Future of Our Parish

True renewal begins with local leadership committed to transforming parish culture — from passive attendance to personal calling, from spectatorship to discipleship, and from asking, “What do I get from this?” or “What time or energy can I give?” to the deeper question: “What does Christ ask of me?” Without such a cultural shift, other efforts will have limited impact. This is why the vitality of the parish is essential to the life and future of the Church. If a parish is to be a community called by God, gathered around Christ in Word and Eucharist, and sent forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, then this vision must shape every conversation, homily, ministry, and decision.

Key Insights:



- The parish has a variety of groups and activities, but overall attendance and participation are declining.
- People are willing to help when asked, but often don't proactively volunteer. New parishioners and visitors may feel less connected without intentional introductions and opportunities to engage.

Recurring Themes:

- Concern about declining parish numbers.
- How to attract and retain new members, particularly younger and new families.
- The need for effective communication and evangelizing. Importance of creating opportunities for people to meet and connect across the parish.

Suggestions / Actions:

- Introduce name tags to help people connect.
- Develop a note board or central communication listing volunteer opportunities and activities.
- Maintain contact with those who are ill, lonely, or recently bereaved.
- Advertise parish activities through local media and social media.
- Establish new social/support groups (e.g., for widows). Encourage people to mix and move within seating/activities to meet others.

Additional Insight:

- A structured, intentional approach is needed to involve new or different individuals and strengthen parish cohesion.

Theme: Volunteering

In spirituality, service to others is deeply connected to the teachings of Christ. For many believers, their actions are guided by Jesus' words, which show that serving others is ultimately serving Him. This understanding has a strong scriptural foundation and demonstrates how living a life of service can transform both individuals and communities.

The call to serve as an expression of faith is rooted throughout the Bible. Many passages emphasize helping those in need and reveal the connection between such acts and one's relationship with Christ.

A key example is Matthew 25:40: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

In this parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus shows that serving the marginalized and needy is not merely charity, but a profound act of faith — as if one were serving Christ Himself.

Key Insights:

- Volunteering brings joy, spiritual reward, and meaningful relationships for both volunteers and those they serve.
- Encouraging participation and engagement across all age groups, including young people, fosters a culture of giving and community connection. Clear communication and guidance are essential to make volunteering accessible and manageable.

Recurring Themes:

- Volunteers benefit personally and spiritually from giving their time.
 - Inclusivity and welcoming approaches are important – no “closed clubs.”
 - Early engagement of young people is valuable for long-term participation.
- Clear, up-to-date information about opportunities and skills is crucial.

Suggestions / Actions:

- Maintain an easily accessible, regularly updated list of volunteer opportunities and tasks.
 - Communicate opportunities through multiple channels (website, email, Facebook, newsletters).
 - Keep tasks simple, provide mentoring, induction, and team leadership.
 - Encourage youth participation and nurture them through guidance and opportunities.
- Consider improvements to assembly logistics for inclusivity and accessibility (smaller groups, alternative venues, separate events).

Additional Insight:

Participants valued the assembly itself as a positive, engaging experience, highlighting the importance of frequent opportunities for discussion and input.

Theme: Synodality

Synodality is the walking together of Christians with Christ and towards God's Kingdom, in union with all humanity. Orientated towards mission, synodality involves gathering at all levels of the Church for mutual listening, dialogue, and community discernment. It also involves reaching consensus as an expression of Christ rendering Himself present - He who is alive in the Spirit.

Furthermore, it consists in reaching decisions according to differentiated co-responsibilities. Along these lines, we can understand better what it means to say that synodality is a constitutive dimension of the Church.

In simple and concise terms, synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ.

Key Insights:

- Synodality is understood as listening, participation, and being Church together, involving both leadership and grassroots members.
- The parish values active listening, inclusivity, and **communion** across different Mass centres and groups.
Living faith through example and respectful engagement is central to strengthening community and mission.

Recurring Themes:

- The importance of welcoming everyone and valuing diverse perspectives.
 - Moving forward while maintaining parish identity.
 - Emphasis on action following discussion rather than only conversation.
- Building unity through shared participation and respectful example.

Suggestions / Actions:

- Act on decisions and agreements – follow through.
- Keep churches open for quiet reflection and access.
- Continue community meetings and opportunities for voices to be heard.
- Encourage parishioners to participate actively in forums; engagement is key to being heard.
Recognize and build on the priest's role in unifying and guiding the parish community.

Additional Insight:

Concerns and feedback are legitimate only when expressed through participation in parish processes; active engagement sustains a truly synodal parish.

Theme: Community Engagement

Churches can enhance their community engagement through various activities such as organizing events, offering services, and building partnerships with local organization.

By implementing strategies, churches can effectively engage with their communities, build meaningful relationships and extend their mission beyond the church walls.

This engagement not only benefits the community but also enriches the church's own congregation.

Key Insights:

- The parish values a sense of **togetherness and mutual support**, rooted in faith, hospitality, and shared activities.
- Community engagement exists both **within the parish and externally**: outreach programs (CWL, prison ministry, hampers), collaboration with other churches, and local events (BBQs, Christmas pageant).
There is **strong involvement of the school**, but there is a sense of separation between school parents and regular Mass attendees; opportunities exist to bring these groups together.

Recurring Themes:

- Strengthen parish-school connections.
- Increase awareness of each other's faith journeys.
Encourage broader participation in parish activities and groups.

Suggestions / Actions:

- Host youth-led Masses with social activities.
- Invite school parents to parish events (meals, Masses, excursions).
- Use media and communication channels to reach more people (Facebook, parish bulletin, local newspaper).
- Expand existing initiatives (Men's Breakfast, Alpha program) to include school and lapsed families.
- Foster links with other groups (Rosary, Bible societies, neighbouring parishes).
Practical supports like car-pooling to Mass to increase participation.

Additional Insight:

Activities that integrate parish, school, and wider community (excursions, videos, media presence) can help build stronger, lasting connections

Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish Assembly 2025

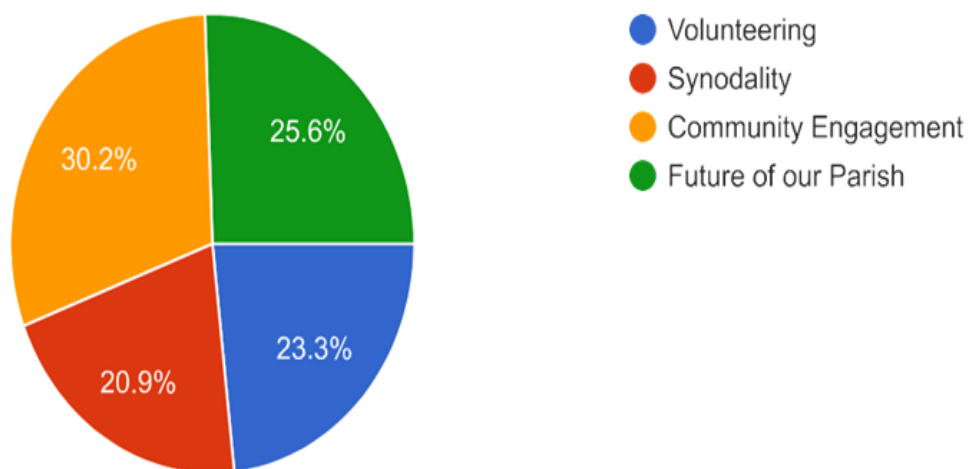
44 responses

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Which group/s did you participate in?

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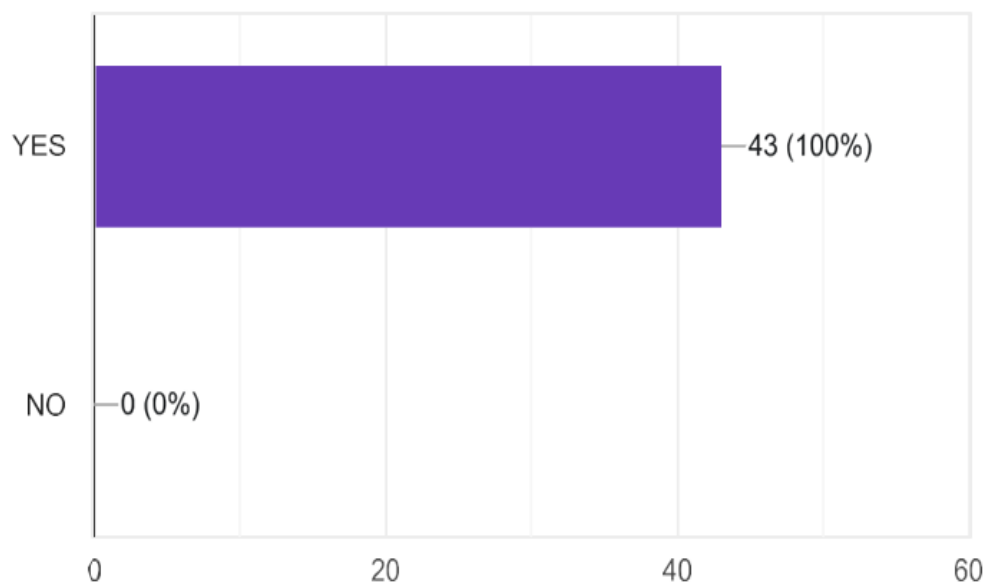
43 responses



Were your ideas, and those of others, heard fairly and respectfully?

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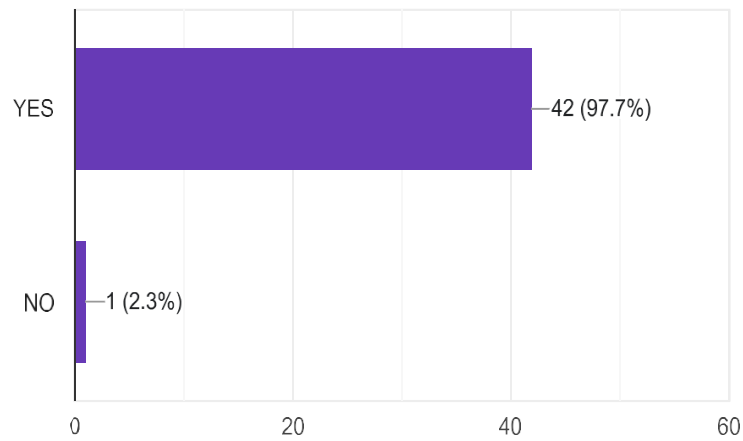
43 responses



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Did people listen without interrupting or dominating the session?

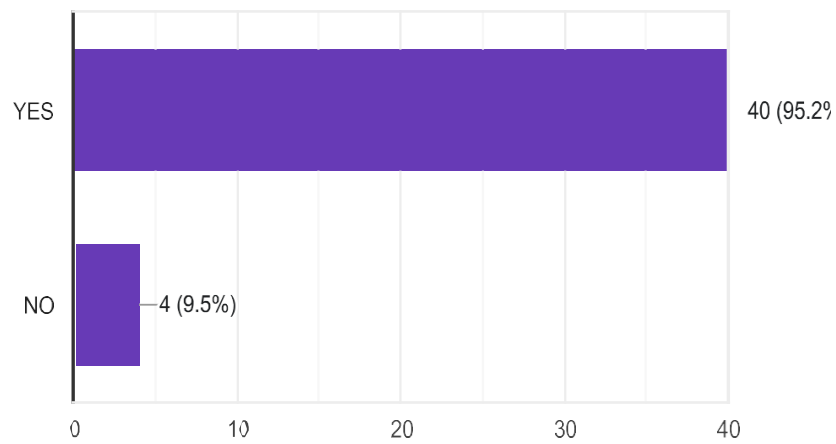
43 responses



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Was there time to respond to other people's ideas?

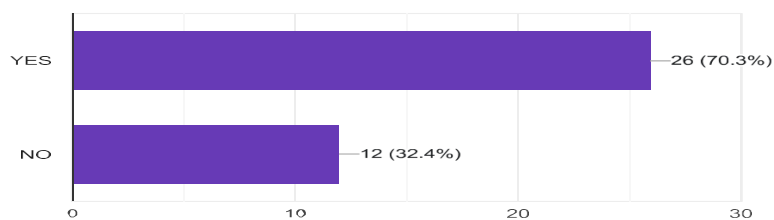
42 responses



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Was there prayerful reflection in your group?

37 responses



What were the highlights of your assembly experience?

41 responses

Sharing the diversity and the work needed to unify the parish - and its separate churches. Meeting new parishioners.

Strength of the commitment and spirit to work together.

Participation, involvement, sharing ideas, increased understanding of synodality.

Getting to know our people from Northern area.

Listening to different options. Meeting other parishioners from the northern end.

Rhianon mentioned that an updated website (Rhianon is a keen photographer) could be valuable to young families. (Mothers able to read late at night and check an events/volunteering/mass times etc etc)

Prayerful reflection in people's comments.

Sense of community, careful reflection and respectful responses.

Excellent facilitator.

Meeting fellow parishioners from other mass centres.

Sharing ideas in a respectful manner.

Understanding more about "synodality"

Communication

First time to join the parish assembly and I felt its a very good initiative to engage the community.

Meeting the people, learning more, hearing ideas

Coming together of four centres into one community for a better future.

Each person was encouraged to contribute their ideas.

We were all encouraged to listen respectfully.

Missed prayerful reflection as I was between groups.

The discussion process, hearing different perspectives.
Meeting new people and listening to ideas shared with myself.
Safe spaces to be a part of.
Hearing the different views.

Community sharing

Hearing various views, particularly people's personal experiences.
Leaders in our group were excellent.
Considered current, explored future, enabled ways to achieve.
Attack existing. "low hanging fruit" to get traction, then.
Wonderful to be in the company of like minded people.
Being part of the broader parish family.
Chance to hear how and what people are thinking.
Good interaction.
Thinking about the future of our parish.
A lot was covered in a short time: the holy spirit was present.
Hearing from others. Suggestions from participants.
Well organized. clear procedure.
Everyone willing to contribute.
Hearing about other peoples perspectives.
Meeting new people.
Better than last time as less questions to work on and discuss. Not rushed.
Hearing from a new member of our parish, his experience of being welcomed into our parish.
Very positive.
Encouraging a younger member of our parish to attend the assembly and share her ideas to welcome young families. And hearing about her offer as a photographer to help with our parish website with making it extra attractive to encourage other young families to come to mass.

In the group settings, was able to meet other parishioners and catch up with others from the southern end of the parish.

Able to embrace other/new ideas/strategies.

That people were given the opportunity to speak or not speak and the opportunity to listen.

Highlighting the needs necessary to engage the community.

Being heard.

This is my second attendance to the assembly, and I feel I am understanding more the purpose of it.

Time to put individual ideas clearly and discussion was helpful.

Understanding and agreement on ideas.

People returning to church needing to connect with the church community.

Information and Education re the meaning of the topic and the history of its involvement in the church.

Ideas around advertising/inclusivity/demystifying aimed at assisting people back to Church and more understanding of Church community activities

Everyone contributed. Great lunch.

Re-meeting parishioners from other parish centres.

A little bit of prayerful reflection (commensurate with time pressure!).

Respectful and friendly discussions.

Please offer suggestions that may improve our next assembly.

29 responses

Break out spaces - sometimes it was hard to hear people's comments.

More clarity around the definition of synodality and specific actions arising.

Use Parish meeting room, church, hall and church back room

Happy with the assembly.

Was good value using the church and the hall for the groups

Now to put the ideas into action.

Maybe smaller groups, but more of them, to allow for more time.

Name tags for people participating.

Share topics couple of weeks prior to allow the participant to be ready.

With the proximity of other groups, hearing what was being said was difficult. Somehow encourage the younger generation to come along and contribute their ideas.

N/A - went well

Allow participants to choose at the start if there is a particular group they want to join for the session.

Personally invite parish youth to attend to contribute to such group discussions as community connection and future of the church.

Less noisy environment. (4 other comments)

Examples of "steps" towards future change - outcomes. Cant do all at once; select/prioritise/initiate ie many "low hanging fruit" already exists, (but not activation); other more difficult. select based on available resources.

I would like it to be more reflective time alone to consider and pray about topics before discussion and feedback.

Too noisy - need to be further apart.

Great forum, but too noisy.

Name tags please. (One other comment)

Two assigned groups preferable for wider input.

Separate areas for groups as difficult to hear.
Thankyou for the preparation, it was well organised.

Each group be in a different area - very hard to hear and concentrate. Otherwise, excellent and well planned assembly.

Name tags -

This is a good forum, works well.

Need more elaboration on matters discussed

Less noise - it was difficult to hear due to surrounding groups.

Having the groups in different areas to improve listening and hearing ability.

Being given a summary of each group in paper/email afterwards. Maybe a whiteboard summary for us all to see. Make points of action for future.

Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish Volunteering

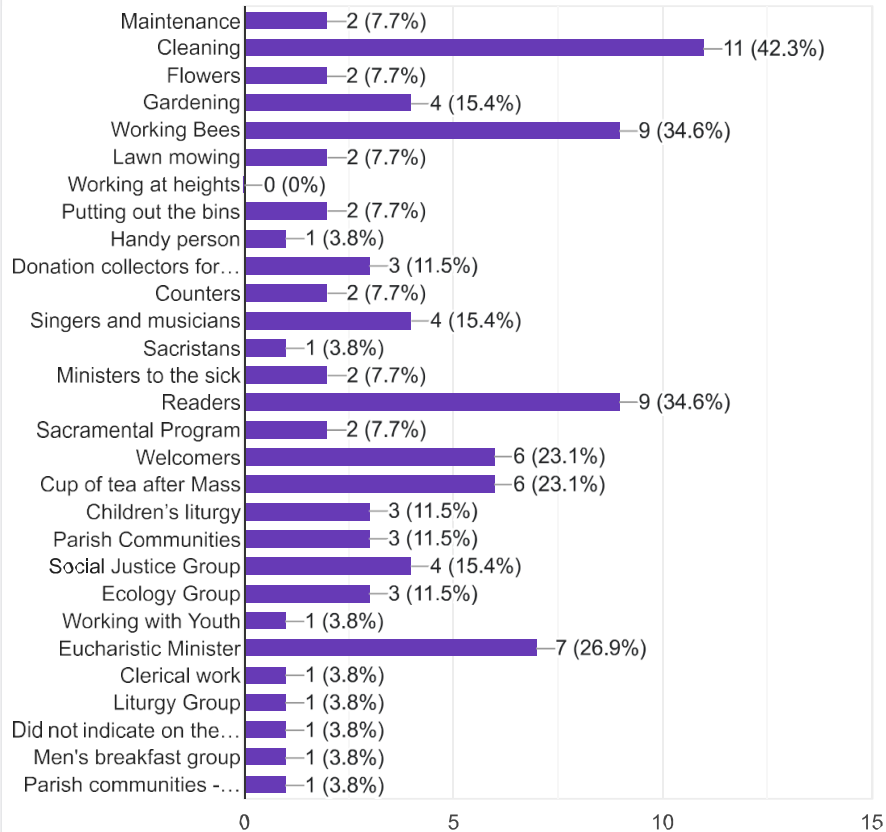
26 responses

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Which of the following parish activities would you like to be involved in?
(Select all that apply)

26 responses



Which Church within our parish would you like to volunteer at?

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26 responses

