



Fr Fred, left, and Parish Pastoral Council chair John Leeton with the Nativity set lovingly restored by our parish priest last year

A special thanks to so many for a memorable year

By Fr Fred

Last month, As we prepare to begin our Advent Season and move toward the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, I can't help but reflect on the numerous blessings that we have all received throughout the year.

There have been many losses, trials, sadness and pain, but all of those things have been surrounded by the glory and love of our Lord's presence in our lives.

We celebrated with two new members joining the church, Scott Fisher and Ben Sugars, and welcomed Cate Branscheld, who is currently going through the RCIA programme. We have had the usual repairs carried out at our churches and there has been much happening across the wider parish, which is shared by the various communities in this special Annual Report issue of *The Bridge*.



I'll touch on a few things very briefly. The Men's Group has organised working bees at both the Bridgewater and Birdwood ends and their tremendous work has helped with the upkeep of the grounds around the churches.

The Social Justice Group continues to raise funds for charity, while the Liturgy Group sees to it that our parish functions

with the leadership of God's Word, and despite in need of a few new members, our choir under Damian Mansfield goes about leading our worship services with glory and praise. Speaking about music across the parish, I thank our folk group and look forward, with hope, to the reemergence of our youth music ministry.

The Ecology Group is slowly taking shape with John Leeton at the helm, while the year saw three

Continued on page 2



St Matthew's
Bridgewater



St Joseph's
Lobethal



St Matthew's
Birdwood



Our Lady of the Rosary
Stirling



St Catherine's
Stirling

Continued from page 1

A special thanks to so many for your 2025 support

of our youth, through NET, dedicated themselves to bring other young people back to God in many parts for Australia.

I am proud, too, that we are the only parish in South Australia to publish a monthly parish magazine, *The Bridge*, and convey a special thank you to the editor, Paul Robinson.

I cannot stop thanking and congratulating all our volunteers: lectors, extraordinary ministers, welcomers, and the counting and cleaning groups, to name but a few.

All of you are the heart of the parish, I feel very grateful for all the support you bring to our parish community. Thank you very much for all your efforts.

Thanks also go to our parish staff for the hard work they have done this past year. It was sad that Judith McPhee had to resign due to ill health, and I thank Judy for the countless hours she volunteered every Tuesday morning. Together with pastoral co-ordinator Cathie Oswald and new secretary, Margaret Smitherman – welcome, Margaret! – they have certainly worked as a team.

The Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council have always given, and continue to give, their best, and volunteers Mark McGeough and Marianne Berry do likewise in their areas of

Safeguarding and WHS respectively.

In 2025, we suffered the loss of Susan Mclean, Lorenzo Farretto, Helen Healy and Neil Osborne, and also lost parishioners who moved from our parish area to more suitable accommodation down the hill.

I am delighted that the important relationship between school and parish continued to grow over the year, and I thank acting principal Mark Simpson and APRIM Carla Thomas for their efforts while welcoming back John Low as principal of St Catherine's Catholic School.

As a congregation, we will continue to pray for those in need of our strength and support throughout the coming year.

It seems like 2025 was such a short year, but it was full of so many lessons and the understanding of God's work that has been done through each one of us, especially during our Parish Assembly 2025.

We are the shepherds of his flock, sent to share his Holy Word with the world.

My prayer for you all is that the new year will bring you peace, hope, joy and love, and that God's blessings will surround you as we journey forward together. In Christ's holy name, I wish you all a blessed and Holy Christmas.

A time to reflect on the year...and share what makes our parish special



Where has the year gone? is a cry we hear all too often, and it's a lament that is certainly true of 2025.

And while hard to believe it's December and Christmas is but weeks away, it's rewarding to know that so much has been achieved by so many across the Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish, with Fr Fred leading the charge and parishioners and volunteers from all Mass centres chipping in to create the rich and rewarding fabric that makes our parish so special.

As is customary, we honour these many endeavours by devoting the December issue of *The Bridge* to an annual report on the activities of the four Mass centres of St Matthew's Bridgewater, St Matthew's Birdwood, St Joseph the Worker Lobethal and Our Lady of the Rosary Stirling East, as well as the happenings at the spread of organisations.

We thank all for their valued contributions and carry their reports on pages 3 to 20.

IN THIS ISSUE

Pastoral Coordinator Report	3
Birdwood Report	4
Lobethal Report	5
OLOR Report	6
PPC and PFC Reports	7&8
St Catherine's Report	9
Ecology Report	10
Social Justice Report	11
Vinnies Reports	12
Baptism Report	13
CWL Reports	14&15
Safeguarding Report	16
Faith Formation Report	18
Children's Liturgy Report	20
General News	21&22



Our parish continues to offer a welcoming haven to all

By Pastoral Coordinator Cathie Oswald



The altar is again dressed in purple, signalling the Advent season and the beginning of a new liturgical year, and once again I ask the question "where has the time gone?". In many ways in the wider world, it has been such a turbulent year with the change in government in the USA bringing such an unsettling impact on much of the world.

Terrible wars continue to rage in the Middle East and in Ukraine with numerous outbreaks of conflict in other areas; in all instances though, scant concern is given to the millions of innocent victims caught up in these conflicts. It would be easy to allow the sadness of the situation to completely overwhelm us, however through the darkness we are conscious of the presence of the Holy Spirit urging us to be "Pilgrims of Hope".

In contrast to the turmoil in so many parts of the world, our Adelaide Hills parish has continued to run smoothly offering a welcoming haven to all, catering for the material and spiritual needs of our parishioners.



Fr Fred celebrates Mass at Bridgewater on Palm Sunday

Fr Fred has overall responsibility, but it could not be done without the help of our wonderful volunteers. For example, it is easy to take for granted those who volunteer for the Welcoming Ministry; it is a simple thing, but what a difference it makes when you enter the church to be greeted with a smile and handed the weekly bulletin with a quick enquiry as to "are you feeling better?" or 'how was the holiday?'.

Regardless of whether you are a regular or an occasional Mass attendee, that feeling of belonging, being part of a community is integral to our feeling of self-worth.

As in previous years, the first major event of 2025 was the Parish Picnic and from then it continued in much the same way, with the many volunteers ensuring the success of each occasion.

Easter is always a wonderful celebration in our

parish and relies not only on Fr Fred but also Damien Mansfield (choir master), Mary Homann (sacristan) and Paul Anderson (altar person). Eighteen children completed their initiation into the Catholic Faith participating in the Sacramental Programme and ultimately being Confirmed and receiving the Eucharist for the first time. The success of the Sacramental Programme relies heavily on the contribution made by our parish school, St Catherine's, and more specifically by the APRIM, Carla Thomas.

To mark the 2025 Jubilee Year, the parish organised a pilgrimage to Sevenhill, which provided an opportunity for renewal, reflection and spiritual growth. We travelled by bus, reciting the Rosary along the way and, on arrival, special prayers were said before entering St Aloysius' Church, where Fr Fred celebrated a special Jubilee Mass. It was a beautiful and spiritually uplifting day.

Our Parish Secretary Judy McPhee has been plagued by ill health for much of the year and sadly retired from her position. As well as being Parish

Secretary, Judy has for more than 10 years provided valuable assistance to Fr Fred in a volunteer role and will certainly be missed. Margaret Smitherman has taken on Judy's role, and I am looking forward to working with her. Margaret, too, has been an active volunteer in the northern end of the parish for many years.

It has been a difficult year for Fr Fred, with the sudden death of his beloved brother Lino; to be so far away in a time of such sadness is hard. Thankfully, he was able to go to Malta to visit his family and to pray at his brother's grave.

As always, I have loved my role as Pastoral Coordinator.

While I no longer live in the Hills, I find myself drawn back to the parish – it is unique. It is such a privilege to be a small part in the lives of so many of you.

I thank you all for your support and love.



Many hands make light work at St Matthew's Birdwood

By Lea Crosby

Our Northern End meetings are a great way for parishioners from Lobethal and Birdwood churches to gather and discuss with Fr Fred any events or issues.

Many tasks have been completed at St Matthew's Church at Birdwood this year due to the support of Fr Fred and parishioners.

These include the clearing and refurbishing of the Memorial Garden and the replacement of lights and new wiring inside the church. The parish house was vacated in March, with much planning and activity occurring since. Repairs and maintenance need to be completed prior to the house being available for rent.

A new air conditioner was needed in the Mary O'Dea Centre and has now been installed – and while it sounds all so easy when writing it, you can be sure a great deal of planning goes into these tasks.

It's here that we truly thank Fr Fred for his guidance and ongoing practical and pastoral care.

Our parish members generously support the Birdwood Pantry that supplies food hampers to needy people in the community, and during the year, held a raffle to raise additional funds for this most worthy cause.

We congratulate long-time parishioner, Bob Brooksby, who bought the winning ticket!

Assistance is also given prior to Christmas each year by way of St Vincent de Paul hampers that are distributed to local schools and those in need in the community.

During 2025, Leon Holmes, who was a parishioner at St Matthew's Birdwood for many years, created the beautiful Way of the Cross sculptures that are now located in the grounds at the front of the church.

We thank Leon for the wonderful gift he has given us and as a community, we look forward to the



Long-time parishioner and winner of our Birdwood Pantry raffle, Bob Brooksby

blessing of the project during Lent 2026.

Birdwood parishioners also attended and supported the parish celebrations in many ways, including helping with the catering at the annual Picnic Mass at Oakbank Racecourse. Other events to enjoy our support were the Parish Retreat, the Ecology Sunday Mass at St Catherine's School, the recent Parish Assembly at St Matthew's Bridgewater, the Way of the Cross pilgrimage through the streets of Stirling East to Our Lady of the Rosary (OLOR) Church ahead of Easter, and the Social Justice Group's annual Melbourne Cup Lunch fundraiser.

Thank you to Fr Fred who travels to Birdwood each Wednesday to celebrate Mass and on the first and third Sunday of each week. We also look forward to celebrating Advent and Christmas Masses at Birdwood during this special time of year.



Birdwood parishioners supported many parish celebrations, among the April Way of the Cross pilgrimage in Stirling



Improvements aplenty at Lobethal

By Gayle Raven and Janet Harrison



Michael and Rosie Russell have done a great job rebuilding the church's brick planter box

The Annual Parish Picnic at the Oakbank Race Course on 23 February was an enjoyable parish event with our members assisting. Michael Russell, with his guitar and fine voice, provided the music during Mass, while Bob Brooksby again brought his interesting collection of sailing ships.

On Good Friday, members led the Stations of the Cross, and in late afternoon Fr Fred led the Liturgy of Good Friday. All services were well attended and feedback was that they were spiritual and meaningful in their preparation for Easter Sunday.

On Sunday 4 May, we celebrated the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, organised by Timi and Michelle Chua. Fr Fred celebrated Mass to a church filled with parishioners and visitors from Adelaide and other areas. It was a truly joyous Mass, spiritually enriched by the heavenly voices of the Filipino Couples for Christ (CFC) Music Ministry Choir. The Thanksgiving meal that followed was delicious and a great opportunity for fellowship.

There have been several church improvements this year thanks to Fr Fred. A major problem of water damage to the ceiling and the kitchen floor was rectified with the installation of eight rainwater pipes with their own overflow being affixed to the outside walls, not internally as they were previously.

The kitchen floor needed replacing. With the leaking problems fixed, the wheelchair access ramp can now be installed. This has been organised by Fr Fred for early next year. Michael and Rosie Russell have done a great job rebuilding the brick planter box on the outside rear corner of the church using second hand red bricks matching the colour of the church. Rosie also weeded the planter box, giving the plants a big lift.

The outside brick wall adjacent to the repaired planter box needs rendering, which has been organised by Fr Fred and will be done soon, as will replacing the weather damaged timber window frames in the back meeting room with aluminium frames.

It is great to see the trees heavily cut back last December now reshooting, looking less bare and creating more privacy between the Church and neighbours.

Members from Lobethal continue to support the Birdwood United Church Pantry, with food for the needy. They also participated with members from Birdwood in the Northern End meetings held bi-monthly on Wednesdays in the Mary O'Dea Centre and led by Fr Fred. Some members from Lobethal form part of the Birdwood CWL.

We thank our volunteers who perform a variety of roles at Lobethal. They include Timi and Michelle Chua who provide the Mass Power Points, and our wonderful musicians, Denise Rofe and Michael Russell. We also thank Eric Toome, our Parish Pastoral Council representative, Jo Brickhill who serves on the Parish Liturgy Group and Gayle Raven who is on the Parish Finance Council. During this year, Anne Moore and Eric Toome helped prepare parents for the baptism of their children. We cannot miss thanking all the cleaners, readers and Eucharistic Ministers who fill our rosters throughout the year.

We especially thank Fr Fred for all the thousands of ways he spiritually nurtures, encourages and supports our parish and its members, and for ensuring that all our Mass centres are lovingly maintained.



An open invitation to all to come and enjoy our spiritual home at OLOR

By Debbie Somers

After a very busy year at the Our Lady of the Rosary (OLOR) Church, the time has come to say a big thank you to Fr Fred for his enduring leadership and spiritual guidance. As always, he has been very proactive in his attention to the needs of all who worship here.

Thanks must also go to all the volunteers who have given so generously of their time and talents in the many and varied roles that keep the wheels turning.

Our first Jubilee Year event was a walking pilgrimage in April entitled "The Way of the Cross". It was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Lenten services continued to be celebrated at OLOR, as well as the ever-popular Feast of Our Lady. We welcomed Scott Fisher into the Catholic Church on 19 October after he completed the RCIA program with Fr Fred.

The Memorial Garden plots are filling up fast, and next year the lawn will be replaced with artificial turf and a garden planter, while the area around the statue of Our Lady has been blessed with many donated roses.

Thanks to Tristan Barnes for digging and preparing the rose bed. We would be delighted if you could join us in the Garden on the first Saturday of each month to maintain the front garden area under the direction of Paul Anderson.

Paul Howe keeps the back garden neat and tidy, but we could always do with and would appreciate more green thumbs!

For security, a new Crimsafe door has been installed and the shed has been well used for catering purposes at celebrations throughout the year.

The stained-glass windows booklet is on its final draft, so watch this space for a launch date. It's heartening to know, too, that our cute Street Library is being used.

The reciting of the Rosary each Tuesday at 4.00pm continues, we have a morning Mass each Monday at 9.00am and the attendance at the Sunday evening Mass keeps growing. Thank you to Paul Anderson our sacristan and Joseph Sharp as altar server.

WHS issues again are handled expertly by Marianne Berry and Damian Mansfield will be playing the organ once again for our Carols Night, and this year during Advent, we celebrate Novena with Mass.

The community meetings continue and we thank Fr Fred for his efforts in arranging the agenda for us. And, as always, weddings, baptisms and funerals keep us busy.

In closing, place 31 December in your diaries as Fr Fred will celebrate a New Year's Eve Mass at 6.00pm, followed by the serving of champagne and treats. On behalf of the OLOR community, we would like to invite everyone to come and enjoy the spiritual home at our little church in Stirling East and we look forward to warmly welcoming you.



The Way of the Cross, above, was well attended while, top, Scott Fisher was welcomed into the Church



Just some of the more than 60 parishioners who attended the Parish Assembly on 19 October

Parish Assembly a major 2025 highlight for Parish Pastoral Council

By PPC Secretary, Inge Parodi



The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) continues to support Fr Fred in guiding the spiritual and pastoral life of the Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish. In keeping with the PPC Handbook, our work remains grounded in collaboration, synodality and thoughtful discernment. Throughout 2025, the PPC has continued to grow in effectiveness, continuously refining the way we work and how we engage with the wider parish community.

A key strength of the PPC is our willingness to adapt. Much of our work now happens through focused working groups that undertake specific tasks and report back at monthly meetings. This approach has helped us respond more efficiently to parish needs and draw more deeply on the strengths and skills of our members.

A major highlight of the year was the Parish Assembly in October. The Assembly served its purpose exceptionally well, bringing together parishioners from across the Adelaide Hills to listen, reflect and share. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with parishioners offering valuable insights into parish life, needs, and hopes for the future. These insights and feedback are being considered as part of taking action and shaping next steps for the parish.

Another significant part of parish life is our parish-school relationship, which continues to be a great source of strength and mutual support. In 2025, Mark Simpson stepped into the Acting Principal role at St Catherine's and did an outstanding job in maintaining stability and nurturing a positive school community. We thank Mark for his commitment and the value he brought to the PPC during his time with us. His contribution was deeply appreciated. In

November, we were pleased to welcome John Low back to his Principal position. The parish and school remain deeply committed to working together, seizing every opportunity to be Church together and building on an already strong foundation.

On a more general level, the PPC meets monthly with a structured agenda that includes prayer and reflection, updates on life around the parish, and key items for discussion and discernment. Standing agenda areas include the parish calendar, safeguarding, finance, ecology, devotion and other priorities as they arise.

Our conversations are also guided by the five-year Strategic Plan for the parish, helping us remain focused, consistent and aligned with broader diocesan directions. The PPC continues to work in close partnership with Fr Fred and in step with the Archdiocese of Adelaide, ensuring that our decisions and priorities support both local needs and the wider mission of the Catholic Church.

The year in review has been one of learning, growth and renewed energy. The PPC remains committed to continuous improvement – strengthening our processes, deepening our engagement with parishioners and discerning together the best ways we can support parish life.

As we move into 2026, we are reminded that our work is ultimately guided by faith: that through prayer, reflection, and the Spirit's guidance, we can continue to serve our parish with love, hope and generosity. We thank parishioners for their contributions, participation and encouragement. Together, we will continue to build a vibrant and hopeful Catholic community in the Adelaide Hills.



Prudent PFC achieves much while balancing books

By Paul Howe, Chair, Parish Finance Committee

As Chair of the Parish Finance Committee (PFC), I am privileged to work with a dedicated group of parishioners who share this common goal of care and stewardship of the monies entrusted to us with the expectation that we make best use of those funds.

We are most fortunate to have a PFC comprised of forthright, caring and competent people who bring to the table their experiences from all walks of life and professions. I am pleased to report that we have balanced the books again this year.

I thank those who regularly contribute to the planned giving program as well as the various other special collections that we have during the year. This year we continued to make improvements at each of the Mass centres – to mention just some: electrical works and upgrades, as well as the more pressing maintenance issues.

When Fr Fred was away on a well-deserved break, it gave us the chance to upgrade the bathroom at the Bridgewater parish house. At Birdwood, new air conditioning was recently installed at Mary O'Dea Centre and upgraded lighting installed in the church.

There was also the garden clean up at Birdwood, where the Holmes' 'Stations of The Cross' creation, pictured above, has been installed. Currently, we have a builder on site refreshing the parish house at Birdwood so that it can be let in the New Year. It was in much need of catch-up works after many years of minimal care.

At Lobethal, a neglected corner was substantially repaired by a parishioner and his wife – locating and carrying bricks, chasing up materials, the labour of carefully laying them – all for a good result.

So many of the 'smaller' jobs around the parish are undertaken quietly by volunteers. A special thank you as this helps to reduce spending and benefits all parishioners.

Behind every church is a full cast of helpers – the churches get cleaned, flowers are done, service preparation is timely, someone provides music, welcoming, attendants, morning teas and other catering – it's seemingly endless.

I see what efforts people put in and so often it requires much 'behind the scenes' running about getting materials, ingredients or supplies...then there's the labour of carrying out the tasks that make for a smooth service which we all share.

I once asked Archbishop Patrick O'Regan what we could do to support Fr Fred, and his answer was to attend Mass and support parish events.

Gloria and I enjoy attending Mass at each of the four churches in our parishes and it's an opportunity to see what is happening locally.

I want to share a personal 'thank you' to all who make our parish so vibrant and welcoming. Fr Fred remains vigilant with the parish finances.

Hopefully in the New Year he will get some assistance with the bookwork – it's important that this be done accurately and timely but this can be onerous at times.

A special mention for Cathie Oswald – she moved down to 'the flat' a year ago and yet continues to support parish activities, notwithstanding the frequent and extensive mileages involved.

My personal thanks to Cathie for the enormous amount of work she does across the parish...and always with a smile on her face and a generous heart.

And Cathie...your cooking is legendary!

To all our parishioners and their families, I wish all blessings for this special time of year and let us all pray for world peace. We are so blessed to be a part of such a warm and welcoming community.



Parish-School partnership further strengthened during year in review

By Principal, John Low



Returning to the St Catherine's School community in Term 4 has been a time of gratitude and grace as I reconnected with our families and staff. From July 2024 to October 2025, I was blessed with the opportunity to serve as a School Performance Leader (SPL) with Catholic Education South Australia. In this role, I worked alongside principals and leadership teams across 17 schools and colleges, supporting their efforts to strengthen learning, wellbeing and Catholic identity. This work involved guiding improvement planning, analysing data and building leadership capacity to ensure decisions were strategic, student-centred and aligned with Catholic Education's mission. I am grateful for the experience and look forward to bringing these insights into our St Catherine's context.

During my absence, Mark Simpson generously stepped into the role of Acting Principal. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Mark for his clarity of leadership and genuine care for staff and students. His commitment ensured stability and continuity for our community during this time.

Krystina Dawe, our Assistant Principal Religious Identity and Mission (APRIM), also embraced an opportunity to serve as Acting Deputy Principal from October 2024 until December 2025. We welcomed Carla Thomas as Acting APRIM during this period. I sincerely thank Carla for her dedication and for quickly building a strong partnership with our parish.

During 2025, we continued our Strategic Plan commitment to ensure every member of our school community experiences Catholic faith, liturgy, culture and tradition in meaningful and authentic



Our thanks to Mark Simpson, above left, and Carla Thomas, above right, for their contributions as Acting Principal APRIM respectively

ways. This work was strengthened through our partnership with the Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish. Here are some highlights:

Jubilee Year Celebrations

As we embraced the Church's Jubilee Year, St Catherine's shone as a beacon of hope within our parish and school community. We began the year with a beautiful Beginning of Year Mass, where each class received a candle lit from the Easter Candle – a symbol of Christ's light and hope shared among us.

Sacramental Journey

A key focus this year was supporting students and families in their sacramental journey. Our dedicated Sacramental Team comprising Andrea Williams (Year 5), Jenna Coates (Year 3/4) and our APRIM, Carla Thomas, worked closely with the parish to guide families through these important milestones, deepening faith and strengthening our parish-school partnership.

Sustainability and Kitchen Garden

Our Kitchen Garden programme continued to thrive. Year 6 students launched the first produce market of the year, selling fresh harvests. We also welcomed three Isa Brown chickens to our garden, much to the delight of students who enjoyed naming them!

Palm Sunday Celebration

Palm Sunday was a joyful occasion, with students, pictured left with Fr Fred, reenacting Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem and proclaiming "Hosanna!" The SRC led a meaningful liturgy, inviting reflection on the Easter story.



Continued on page 10



Small and scattered Ecology Group welcomes hands, heads, ideas

By John Leeton

Our Ecology year ended with a tree planting and gardening day at St Matthew's Catholic Church, Bridgewater and the parish house grounds, where a dozen native bushes and trees were planted to provide food and eventually shelter for birds, bees and insects.

The groups ethos is to seek knowledge, raise awareness, be seen acting and supporting existing projects. We have a page in each issue of *The Bridge* where we endeavour to provide wise consumer purchasing information, reinforce reducing waste, recycling or repurposing and encourage people to be immersed in nature, God's garden.

Our group is small and scattered and contact is mainly by e-mail, although we do try to meet quarterly on a Sunday after Mass. We are connected to the *Laudato Si* platform which provides regular ecological updates. *Laudato Si* is Pope Francis' encyclical on ecology and climate. Written 10 years ago, it is even more relevant now, and the follow-up *Laudato Deum* reinforces that we are just not doing enough to save God's earth. We all need to act now in everything we do.

Highlights of 2025 included a well-attended public viewing of 'The Letter', the Season of Creation with the blessing of the pets at St Catherine's Catholic School and our tree planting, and with the Catholic Life Communities (CLC) prayer group a visit to Wotton Scrub, Mount George.

Thanks to Bunnings Mount Barker, we facilitated support for the St Catherine's butterfly garden, an ongoing project. We hope to strengthen the group in 2026 and make a difference. If you have ideas and time, you are most welcome.



From left, Paris Huffman, Tom Kovac and Dan De Fazio at work in the St Matthew's Bridgewater gardens

Continued from page 9

Parish-School partnership grows

Religious Education Highlights

Reception students explored themes of kindness, care and hope. They reflected on the role of the Pope, acknowledged the passing of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo, and contributed 'helping hands' to our "Tree of Peace and Hope," symbolising their commitment to peacemaking.

Staff Spiritual Formation

Our staff gathered at the Sofia Centre for a day of spiritual reflection rooted in our Dominican identity.

Guided by the theme *An Encounter of Hope Through Story*, we reflected on the teachings of St Catherine and St Dominic, and the wisdom shared by Fr Fred.

Each participant contributed a word or image onto recycled timber, beautifully crafted and donated by parishioner John Leeton.

Community Generosity

Our community showed outstanding generosity during the Vinnies Appeals, donating food, toiletries, warm clothing, and Christmas gifts.

Feast of St Dominic and Ecology Mass

We celebrated St Dominic's feast with a whole-school Mass, classroom activities and treats from our Parents and Friends.

Our annual Ecology Mass, held indoors due to weather, honoured God's creation and included the blessing of pets – it was, indeed, a joyful occasion followed by morning tea and a sausage sizzle.

As the year draws to a close, we have embraced the season of Advent, inviting all to reflect on how we can share hope, love, joy and peace with others.

It is a privilege to return as Principal of St Catherine's,.

I look forward to continuing our strong partnership with the parish in the year ahead to support our students to become thriving people, capable learners and leaders for the world God desires.

Wishing you a safe, happy, and peace-filled Christmas



A joy working with a Social Justice team that contributes tirelessly in so many ways

By Cathie Oswald



Rosa Richardson's knitting skills have helped to keep these youngsters, above left, warm during Johannesburg's cold winters, while new member Marie Bryce, above right, enjoyed getting to know parishioners while hosting a market stall at the Melbourne Cup lunch

The parish's Social Justice team has again experienced a busy year, raising funds to support various charities while, at the same time, raising awareness of social justice issues.

Meetings are held every six to eight weeks, and a highlight of each meeting is a short presentation by Fr Fred focussed on the manner in which awareness of social justice within the Catholic Church has evolved over time and is rooted in its teachings of human dignity and the common good.

We were delighted to welcome Marie Bryce to our group.

Marie is a long-term parishioner and an example of the way in which being involved, volunteering in parish groups, benefits both the parish community and the individual – making new friends and strengthening that feeling of 'belonging' which is essential to our wellbeing.

Marie organised the market stall held in conjunction with the Melbourne Cup luncheon, and when thanked for her help, she responded:

"I really enjoyed it; it was wonderful to meet and get to know all those people who I see at Mass."

The team was strengthened this year by the talents of Rosa Richardson.

While Rosa is confined to home, she is a skilled

knitter and thanks to her dedication, we were able to give Sr Sheila more than 60 handmade beanies and scarves, which she took to Kopanang outside Johannesburg in South Africa when she visited in September.

As well as Souper Sunday and the Melbourne Cup luncheon, the team provided catering for funerals and for the Ecology Group's film afternoon.

The funds raised from these ventures provided financial support to the Kopanang Project (\$1,800 donated to provide maize and tinned fish), the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Service, Orange Sky, Bright Futures and The Hut in Aldgate.

Our annual toiletries collected for the Vinnies Asylum Seeker and Refugee association has just commenced, with toiletries collected to be delivered in January.

If you would like more information about joining our group, please speak to any of our members at Sunday Mass or contact me via email: catherine@adelaidehillsparish.com.au.

My thanks to all parishioners for their support and their generosity, and my thanks to all members of the team who contribute tirelessly in many, many ways.

You are all a joy to work with.



A year of patchy requests for local Vinnies Conference

By Dan De Fazio

Firstly, I thank our members and supporters in all the various forms of assistance provided to the Stirling Conference. While I cannot name everyone, I do wish to send a special thanks to Fr Fred for his support.

The year has been one of patchy requests from companions needing assistance to overcome unexpected difficulties. I use the term patchy as we had long periods when no one requested our assistance, except for a few long-term acquaintances.

To these companions, we provide further contacts to other appropriate agencies such as financial counselling and request they reduce their frequency of request to three months.

During 2025, our conference has thus far paid out \$6,537. This amount consisted of giving out Coles/Foodland/fuel voucher cards valued at \$50 each, with 24 Coles vouchers, 43 Foodland vouchers and 32 fuel vouchers handed out.

We also provided Foodbank vouchers totalling \$580 to companions who were happy to travel further for the extra benefits of shopping at Foodbanks. We can nominate a reasonable amount into the Foodbank vouchers. We also paid car registration for two families, also assisting with electricity bills and rent.

When comparing this year's companion requests with those of the 2024 calendar year, we are slightly down on the 104 companion requests that saw us pay out \$10,580.

Our final activity for the year is providing Christmas Hampers. A project managed by Marianne Berry, it will see most of these hampers go to the 76 families identified, through the schools in the northern end of the parish, as needing assistance. A further 40 hampers will be provided to companions we assisted this year.

The passing last year of Francis McEvoy has left a void as he had the remarkable ability to spiritually engage members when we opened our meetings.

I leave you with this song reflection Francis played, called 'I Arise Today'.

It is adapted from 'The Dear Cry' and St Patrick's Breast Plate

I arise today, through the strength of heaven;
light of sun, radiance of moon,
splendour of fire, speed of lightning,
swiftness of wind, depth of the sea,
stability of earth, firmness of rock.



Thank You!

This certificate acknowledges the contribution of

*The Members and Donors of the
Stirling Conference*

For supporting the following good works of the St Vincent de Paul Society SA continue to deliver important services to our Companions

**Noarlunga Conference, Whyalla Conference
and the Vinnies Refugee and Asylum Seeker
Service**

Geraldine Hawkes

Geraldine Hawkes
State President

2025

Evelyn O'Loughlin

Evelyn O'Loughlin
Chief Executive Officer

Through the efforts of our parish volunteers at the Bunnings sausage sizzle sessions, funds excess to our needs saw the Stirling Conference donate \$3,000 to each of these entities

I arise today, through God's strength to pilot me;
God's eye to look before me, God's wisdom to guide me,
God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me,
from all who shall wish me ill, afar and a-near
alone and in a multitude.
Against every cruel merciless power
that may oppose my body and soul,

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me.
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
I arise today.



Eleven baptisms across the parish in 2025

By Pam Broadbridge



One of the year's baptisms was that of Frederick Miles, seen above left with, from left, Fr Fred, mum Charlie, dad Sam and godmother and godfather respectively, Riley Jarman and Edward Miles. Above right is the newly baptised Frederick

The Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish Baptism Team recently watched a wonderful 'Words of Fire' video by Bishop Robert Barron during which he stressed that being baptised is a "visible sign of an invisible grace," during which "this child has become a Child of God."

Our team echoes these sentiments and believes the Baptism Ministry is the best ministry in the parish! We currently have two teams of two members in the Bridgewater area and one in the Northern area, but we're always looking for new members. If you wish to be a part of this fulfilling ministry, just talk to Fr Fred or the parish office staff.

Our parish witnessed 11 baptisms this year, with team members visiting young families who are energetic and enthusiastic to present their child to the parish and the wider church. It's always a happy occasion, with every baptism special and unique.

Finally, as the year drew to a close, we hosted a most successful Get-Together Christmas Afternoon Tea for all families whose children have been baptised in the Adelaide Hills Parish.

Held in the Parish Hall on Saturday 6 December, you can see and read more about it on page 22.

Our sewing reaps rewards

By Stasia Duszynski

The St Matthews Sewing Group meets on the first and third Monday of the month during school time, from 10.30am to 2.30pm.

During the year, the group sewed 50 garments consisting of children's tops, trousers, shorts, short sleeve and long sleeve tops, skirts, leggings, pinafores, girls' dresses – long and short sleeves – child's rompers, ladies patterned dresses, ladies skirts and cot blanket.

These garments are delivered to the local Op shop.

We also made six tablecloths for our Our Lady of the Adelaide Hills hall in Bridgewater, and one tablecloth and a pie warmer cover for OLOR.

Our group consists of Donatella (surname), Gloria Howe, Robyn (surname) and me. Of course, we would be happy to welcome any new members.





'Charity, Welcome, Love' drive CWL Stirling

By President, Barb Mott

The Stirling Branch of Catholic Women's League (CWL) is on the move, with new members joining during the year and taking our overall membership to an impressive 16 ladies.

During 2025, we adopted a slightly new approach, along with a new motto to drive us and keep us focused. Put simply, it's 'CWL: Charity, Welcome, Love'. We believe we are given the gift of CWL to share with others and consider ourselves so lucky and blessed to have Catholic Women's League in our lives.

We are here to support each other in our life journey, positioning our Branch as a welcoming place where we can relax and, at least momentarily, set aside any troubles.

That said, our focus has always been on fun, friendship and occasional fundraising – and despite the arrival of newcomers during 2025, we are always hoping for new lady parishioners to join us.

During the year, our members continued to serve St Matthew's Bridgewater in a variety of different ways, among them acting as Ministers of the Eucharist, attending to the Welcoming at Mass duties, taking Communion to the Sick, serving on teams ranging from Baptism and Children's Liturgies to St Vincent de Paul Stirling Conference, the Sewing Group and the Counting Roster.

We follow with interest the development of numerous groups identified in CWL Adelaide Archdiocese newsletters and try to attend these meetings in the city.

Stirling Branch is twinned locally with the SA Country Branch of Kadina and, internationally, with East Jersey in the United Kingdom. This year, donations have been made to Burse Fund, The Hut - Aldgate, Hutt Street Centre, Birthline and Second

Chances, while vouchers have been provided to the Vinnies Christmas Hampers.

Events CWL Stirling members attended in 2025 included;

February – the CWL Beginning of Year Mass at St Joseph's Brighton and our Parish Picnic at Oakbank Racecourse

March – World Day of Prayer, hosted by St Matthew's, Bridgewater and featuring the Cook Islands

May – the CWL Australia Inc National Conference in Sydney and the CWL Stirling Annual Ecumenical Luncheon, where guest speaker Lainie Anderson spoke about her book, 'The Death of Dora Black'

August – the CWL Adelaide Archbishop's Day of Reflection, facilitated by Sr Jenny Seal OLSH

September – the Upper SE Regional Meeting hosted by Murray Bridge, our annual catch-up and lunch with 'twins' CWL Kadina at Virginia Nursery and, with our branch having been established 54 years ago on 28 September, we had foundation member Mary Way recall the auspicious day at our September meeting

December – the CWL Adelaide Archdiocese Christmas Party at Cathedral Hall and the CWL Stirling Christmas get-together lunch at Bridgewater Hotel.

Our next CWL Stirling meeting will be held on Ash Wednesday, 18 February 2026 in the parish hall at Bridgewater, starting with sandwiches at 12.30pm and the meeting itself from 1.00pm.

Why not come along and give it a try?

Finally, we wish to thank Fr Fred and the parish office team for supporting our CWL Stirling Branch.



We hosted Word Day of Prayer, above left, in March, while, above right and pictured with Barb Mott, author Lainie Anderson was guest speaker at our Ecumenical Lunch in May



We continue to support the House of Joy orphanage, above, in the Philippines and used our most recent meeting to, right, celebrate Eileen O'Dea's 88th birthday

Fundraising an important part of CWL Birdwood activity

By Lea Crosby

The Birdwood CWL Branch members gather monthly following the 9am Wednesday Mass at the Mary O'Dea Centre to pray, discuss relevant issues and act on them.

Our current membership stands at nine ladies and, apart from attending Wednesday Mass at Birdwood, followed by morning tea, we support various functions and fundraising in the parish, the wider community and internationally.

We also support each other including during difficult times. Some members have had illnesses and others have lost family members this year. CWL provides an environment where we can pray together and support each other's needs.

Our trading table, supported by donations from our parishioners, families and friends, has proved to be a great way to fundraise. Thanks to all who donate to or purchase from the stall as it contributes to less wastage and provides an opportunity to care for our precious environment while also grabbing a bargain.

Our fundraising in the parish includes organising a raffle and working alongside Stirling CWL members in providing food at the annual Picnic Mass at Oakbank, this year held on Sunday 23 February. This is an important occasion to gather and celebrate Mass with people from the whole parish.

Our Branch supports families by catering at family member funerals at St Matthew's Birdwood, and also supports the Birdwood Pantry. This year, we held a raffle for the pantry, with items donated by our members and funds raised used to purchase food to be distributed to local needy families.

We contribute \$100 annually to the Burse Fund for

the training of priests and \$100 to the Retired Priest's Fund. Gift vouchers are donated to St Vincent de Paul Society for the annual Christmas Hampers prepared for local schools and families.

Our members held a fundraising stall at the Ecology Sunday Mass at St Catherine's School and we thank parishioners who supported us by purchasing items and buying raffle tickets for the Birdwood Pantry.

Our CWL branch, along with donations from the northern end of our parish, continues to support two important projects in the Philippines.

The first, the 'Bread Project' receives \$300 a quarter from our branch to support a feeding programme in many Manila communities experiencing extreme hunger. The project currently supports over 50,000 children and their families, and our donation also assisted community pantries with staple foods.

The second project we fund is the 'House of Joy' orphanage run by the Sisters of Charity for abandoned, disabled children.

When members can, they attend various CWL meetings, including an Archdiocesan meeting held at Glenelg. The guest speaker was the Principal of Compass Catholic Community at Davoren Park, a school attended by some 120 students who have 'fallen through the cracks' and don't fit the standard education system. Birdwood CWL provides 50% of funds raised from our stall to support the school.

Our Branch has agreed to host the next Regional Meeting set for September 2026. We look forward to continuing to support CWL and value the support of our parish.



Safeguarding Unit extends its role and responsibilities in 2025

By Safeguarding Contact Person, Mark McGeough

At the start of the year, a number of changes were implemented in the area of Child Safety. Safeguarding is now the chosen term for keeping safe; Children, Young Adults, Vulnerable Adults and Senior Citizens.

The title of the Child Safety Officer was changed to Safeguarding Contact Person reflecting the new job description. Other changes include the increased responsibility of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and the Parish Secretary in matters of Safeguarding. The recommendations are that the Safeguarding Officer attends all PPC meetings and an agenda item on Safeguarding is included in every meeting.

In June, the Adelaide Hills Parish received a visit from Kerry Tantalos, the Training and Safeguarding Officer for the Diocese's Integrity and Safeguarding Department. She reviewed the way safeguarding is implemented in the parish and made a few minor recommendations.

Overall, she was pleased by our approach to safeguarding, although she did request that all volunteers read through and sign the 'In a Nutshell' document that provides a summarised version of Safeguarding. As our parish had missed out on Safety Training updates, it was felt this interim measure was important while waiting for the online training to become available. This was distributed after all Masses in late August, and my thanks go to all who have completed these forms.

The annual Safeguarding Sunday Mass was held on 14 September, adopting the theme of 'Every Conversation Matters: Shifting Conversations To Action'. There were some excellent entries in the

painting competition, with this year's winners being Sacred Heart Church in Hindmarsh.

In late October, the Safeguarding Unit distributed an online link allowing all volunteers to complete the Safeguarding course.

While there have been some initial set-up problems activating the logins, we expect these to be resolved in the next few weeks, allowing everyone to access this valuable safeguarding training.

Remember if anyone in the parish who has concerns or doubts about the wellbeing of a child, vulnerable adult or senior citizen, please feel comfortable approaching either Fr Fred or myself, or even just passing on my contact details.

My phone number is 0491 150 758, my email address mccgeough@internode.on.net.



HCCC looks to spread 'Christ is Alive and growing...' message

By Maria Thompson

The Hills Combined Christian Churches (HCCC) group is made up of representatives from various Hills Christian churches, including Hills Baptist, Bridgewater Uniting, Aldgate Church of Christ, Grace Lutheran, Sunset Rock Uniting, Crafers Anglican, Aldgate Trinity and The Source and, of course, the Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish currently represented by Lyn Norris and me.

We meet every two months throughout the year to share information on the activities of our different churches and to inform each other of events all our parishioners could share. For example, Sunset Rock Uniting Church has a combined Friday prayer meeting every six weeks from 5pm to 6pm.

The HCCC is also responsible for the management of the Hills Schools Chaplaincy programme in state schools. It's an initiative that not only manages the funds for the pastoral care workers but provides practical support, as evidenced by the pastoral care workers at Heathfield High School running a Breakfast Club for students, where volunteers not only serve breakfast but spend time with the students.

We hope we, the Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish, can all become more involved with the other Christian churches around us in the coming year, to send the strong message that "Christ is alive and growing in the Adelaide Hills".



Men's Breakfast the jewel in Men's Spirituality Group's crown

By Paul Somers



The Men's Spirituality Group, started several years ago, was the brainchild of Liz Kenyon, wife of Neville Kenyon, who were both members of our parish at the time. Its aim is to gather the men of our parish together, to share breakfast and listen to a speaker talking about male spirituality.

It is also intended that, where possible, fathers attend with their sons as the breakfasts provide an opportunity for them to share time together, in fellowship with other males in our parish community.

This year's Men's Breakfast in early May attracted more than 40 males to enjoy each other's company and listen to guest speaker Fr Lancy D'Silva CSC share the life story of Saint Andre Bessette.



Saint André Bessette

Fr D'Silva – he's the Dean of St Francis Xavier Cathedral and Administrator of the Cathedral parish – shared the incredible story of a sickly and simple man who lived a remarkable life of service to the Church and, supported by video and slides, took his audience through the humble works and healing powers of André Bessette, who was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI on 17 October 2010.

Born in a small community near Montreal, Canada in August 1845, he lost his parents and was orphaned at the age of 12. When he was sent to the Holy Cross Brothers, he carried with him a note from his priest saying, "I am sending you a saint."

The rest was history...he took his vows, was posted to Notre Dame College in Montreal where his responsibilities were to answer the door and welcome people. His love of St Joseph later drove

him to build a basilica in his honour, the structure today a must-see destination in Montreal, visited by almost two million pilgrims and visitors each year.

A snapshot of WHS activity

By WHS Volunteer, Marianne Berry

My Work Health and Safety (WHS) work is as a volunteer and I receive fabulous support from Dave Parsons from the Church Office, Fr Fred for implementing any changes that are recommended, and Cathie Oswald, Mark McGeough and the PFC/PPC to help make sure that our parish centres are safe for our parishioners.

Our WHS activity for 2025 included:

Incidents / Hazards / Observations (2)

Incidents that did not cause harm (2). March & April 2025. Closed.

Audits (1)

Parish Property Valuation Review & Risk Assessment (for insurance purposes) – Lobethal & Birdwood, by RiskTech (January 2025)
WHS Audit - Electrical, Asbestos and Emergency Management (February 2025)
Property Department Inspection Report – Lobethal (March 2025)
Property Department Inspection Report – Birdwood (March 2025)

Training (1)

Roll out of (online) Mandatory Safeguarding training for all church employees, clergy and religious persons and volunteers (November 2025)

WHS Activities completed (4)

Workplace walkthrough, four parish centres (February 2025 & August 2025)
Testing & Tagging of fire extinguishers (February 2025 & August 2025) across four parish centres
Annual Thermographic Scanning of electrical switchboards [new] (August 2025)
Asbestos Register annual review, two parish centres (October 2025)

WHS Notices in The Bulletin (2)

Emergency Evacuation notices (May 2025 & October 2025)

Remember that it's important that we take care of ourselves and others – at Mass, being a church volunteer or just living your best life.

Safety is everybody's business.





F&F encourages and guides spiritual life of parishioners

By Paris Huffman

The Parish Faith & Formation (F&F) Group is comprised of Fr Fred, John Leeton, Annette Lamont, Gabrielle Morgan until her recent illness, and me. Cathie Oswald has stepped down from the group and Kathrine Johnson has recently joined.

We are seeking new members, especially from the other Mass centres.

Our purpose is to encourage and guide the spiritual life of our parishioners and to invite others to know the love of Jesus and the joy of community. This year, we met three times to discuss and plan the liturgical year and evaluate parish events.

In February, we evaluated the previous Advent and Christmas programme, noting successes and making recommendations for improvements. We acknowledged the continuing progress of the Christian Life Community group, whose seven members adopted the name Trugarhad and registered with national CLC.

CLC proposed offering Ignatian prayer sessions for parents and staff at St Catherine's School. The Sacramental Program for 2025 was minuted previously, the Baptism Families get-together was reviewed and the Lenten Programme for 2025 was presented by Fr Fred.

The Holy Year of Jubilee inspired two special events, the first being The Way of the Cross to OLOR on 3 April, followed by The Pilgrimage to Sevenhills, pictured above, on 20 June 20th, both of which required F&F planning and organisation.

At the June meeting, the Lenten Programme was reviewed with suggestions. Review of the Way of the Cross to OLOR highlighted how inspirational and community-building it was. Planning for the Pilgrimage to Sevenhills continued, dates were given for the Sacramental Programme's Confirmation and Holy Communion, and it was

decided not to offer the Alpha Programme this year as the Parish Assembly was scheduled for October. We also reviewed Parish Mass attendance at the weekend Masses in May, these being about 200 (up from 160 in 2024).

The October meeting saw us welcome Kathrine Johnston to the group. The Parish Assembly on 19 October was well organised and attended by some 61 people from all Mass centres. The 2025 Sacramental Programme finished with 21 participants, with the 2026 edition to get underway in Term 1 2026. Children's Masses once a month on the third Sunday will be initiated in 2026, set aside to especially include the school community and Ecology and Safeguarding Sunday.

The Trugarhad Group hosted a Season of Creation event for CLC and the parish on 27 September, with CLC offering Ignatian prayer sessions weekly at St Catherine's School in Terms 2 and 3. The newly established Street Library at OLOR is going well, is being used and looks attractive, while Ecology Sunday on 26 October at St Cathrine's School was attended by 80 people.

The Advent and Christmas Programme was presented, discussed and planning begun. Parishioners are invited to join a small group meeting to pray with the Advent booklet on Tuesdays at 7pm at the Parish House. On Synodality Sunday over the weekend of 8 and 9 November, a five-minute video from the Diocese was shown at Mass and an insert placed in the bulletin.

We are blessed with a vigorous parish priest and parishioners filled with vitality. The Parish Assembly highlighted a deep desire to work together to bring the love of Jesus into every facet of our lives. Please consider joining the Faith & Formation Team to contribute your valuable ideas and energy.



CLC accepted as new group on national and global stage

by Paris Huffman



Our parish Christian Life Community (CLC) group has seven members and has been meeting for two years, its members being me, Helen and Jeff Cantwell, John Leeton, Jane McCaffrey, Kath Johnston and Steve Jenkins. We meet at the OLAH hall on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, pray and reflect with a scripture text and share where we have found God working in our lives. We use Ignatian prayer methods and a customary CLC meeting format.

This year, we named our group Trugarhad, a Welsh inspired name meaning God's mercy, Jesus' death and resurrection, His continuing life and that He dwells within us. We were accepted as a new group within the national and world CLC.

Throughout 2024/25, we have been using a wonderful book, 'To Share in the Life of Christ: Experiencing God in Everyday Life' by LL Gooley SJ.

In 2025, the focus was on Experiencing Prayer, Following Jesus and the Unconditional Love of God.

Sharing Ignatian spirituality with St Catherine's School this year, we liaised with the Acting Principal, Mark Simpson, and the APRIM, Carla Thomas. In Term 2, Helen and I met in the school chapel at drop-off time every Wednesday to pray using the Ignatian Field Hospital Exercises developed by Michael Hansen SJ.

Staff and parents were invited to join us. In Term 3 Helen and I joined the staff in prayer on Friday mornings, leading with the FHE when it was our rostered time to lead. Helen and I both appreciated the welcome we felt from

the school.

The Trugarhad group hosted a Season of Creation event for CLC and the parish on 27 September, with people meeting at Wottons Scrub in Carey Gully and, with a ranger and volunteers of the Friends of Kenneth Stirling, we learned about the history and ecology of the site and joined in with weeding or walked with God in nature.

Later, we met at the OLAH hall for a delicious shared lunch, followed by prayers and reflections on an ecological theme. Even if CLC does not ask us to repeat the event next year, I would advocate offering a parish event along these lines.

An End of Year Gathering for all South Australian CLC members, family and friends was held on Sunday, 30 November in Norwood. The program commenced at 3.00pm in the St Ignatius Hall, opening with prayer and moving on to reflection, a cuppa and annual reports. Mass was then celebrated at 5.00pm, followed by dinner, providing a wonderful opportunity for our new members to meet others in the wider SA CLC.

If you are interested in Ignatian spirituality or if the idea of a small group to pray with regularly appeals to you, please contact me on 0400 283 683 or via email – huffbill@ihug.com.au.

The CLC team, from left:

*Steve Jenkins,
Jane McCaffrey,
John Leeton, Paris
Huffman, Helen
Cantwell, Kath
Johnston and Jeff
Cantwell*





Children's Liturgy brings Gospel to young parishioners

By Jane van Mierle and Paula Zanchetta

This year has been a grace-filled journey for the children of our parish. Our Children's Liturgy of the Word program continued to help our young parishioners hear and understand the Gospel in meaningful, age-appropriate ways. Each Sunday, the children were invited to encounter God through Scripture, prayer, discussion, and simple activities that connected the Gospel message with everyday life.

Highlights from the year included:

Gospel reflections adapted especially for children

Short guided prayers to build confidence in worship

Special sessions during Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter to deepen understanding of the liturgical seasons

Our sincere thanks go to all the wonderful volunteers who made the programme possible. We extend heartfelt gratitude to Paula Zanchetta, Karen Dutton, Sue Sachse and Barbara Mott.

A warm thank you also to Fr Fred, Judy McPhee and now Margaret Smitherman, for their guidance and support.

We are deeply grateful to all parents for encouraging their children's spiritual growth and supporting our ministry week after week.

Reflections as We Enter Advent

As we enter the season of Advent and prepare our hearts for the birth of Our Dear Baby Jesus in 2025, we look back with joy on a blessed year.

Although attendance was sometimes small, our gatherings were rich in sharing, learning and faith.

The children embraced the parables from the weekly Gospel, enjoyed stories from the Bible and participated eagerly in discussions and activities.

On sunny days, we even moved outdoors, adding a special sense of joy to our reflections.

Their reverence during prayers, responses and activities has been inspiring. It is truly a privilege to serve

as leaders and helpers in Children's Liturgy.

As we look ahead to 2026, we would like to share a prayer for the year ahead...

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide us and strengthen our ministry as we journey with these wonderful children.

God bless.



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A caring Reception to Year 6
parish school in the heart of the hills



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St Catherine's Catholic School News

As I write my final piece for The Bridge, I want to share how grateful I am for the past five terms as APRIM at St Catherine's. Being part of this beautiful Hills community has been such a privilege, working alongside and learning from our incredible staff, students, families and parishioners. This time will always hold a special place in my heart. I especially want to thank Fr Fred, Cathie Oswald, John Leeton, Mark Simpson and John Low for their guidance, support and mentorship as I stepped into this role.

I'm delighted that Krystina Dawe will be returning to continue the important work of nurturing the strong connection between school and parish, ensuring that faith remains at the heart of all we do. Thank you for welcoming me so warmly and for the many moments of joy and learning we've shared. I wish you all a very blessed Christmas and a happy, hope-filled 2026!

Carla Thomas

Year 6 Reflection Day

On Friday of Week 3, our Year 6 students gathered at St Matthew's Hall for Reflection Day. This was a time to give thanks for the past year and to look ahead with faith and hope. The theme, "Be the Light: Pilgrims of Hope," guided activities and Scripture reflections on relationships formed, growth made and how God's light leads us through change.

Students created candle jars and scrapbook pages to capture memories and values that shaped their journey. They also joined the parish for Mass, where Fr Fred reminded them that each of us carries a unique light of hope. As our leaders prepare for their graduation and transition to secondary school, we are proud of the contribution they made and encourage them to keep shining with kindness, courage and faith.

Cathie for providing a delicious fruit platter that everyone enjoyed.



Year 5s Delight With Nativity Play

On Wednesday 3 December, our Year 5 students delighted the audience with their version of the Nativity Play as part of our Community Christmas Concert. The students embraced a variety of character roles and added touches of contemporary humour to engage all ages while remaining true to the deeper meaning and significance of the Christmas story.

Their creativity and teamwork shone through, making the play a highlight of the evening. The concert was a joyful celebration of faith, community and the festive season and we are so proud of our Year 5 students for sharing the message of hope and love in such a meaningful and memorable way.



Year 3/4 Mass at St Matthew's

On Friday 28 November, our Year 3/4 students gathered with parishioners at St Matthew's Bridge-water for a special Mass as we prepare for Advent. The Scripture focused on the Parable of the Fig Tree, reminding us to be ready and attentive to God's presence in our lives.

Students reflected on their own spiritual growth and created unique fig tree artworks, each symbolising their individuality and readiness for the season ahead.

Following Mass, we shared a lovely morning tea and extend our heartfelt thanks to Fr Fred and





Excellent turnout for Advent Retreat

In what is one of the best attendances in many years, some 25 parishioners from all corners of the parish (pictured above) joined Fr Fred in the Our Lady of the Adelaide Hills hall at Bridgewater for the annual Advent Retreat on Sunday 23 November. The retreat followed the 10.30am Mass and began with a delicious lasagna lunch before Fr Fred led participants through an afternoon of spiritual renewal, reflection and preparation for Christmas, exploring the themes of hope, peace, joy and love.

Baptism families enjoy delicious afternoon tea

By Pam Broadbridge

Baptism families enjoy delicious afternoon teas in the parish in 2025 were celebrated at an afternoon tea for the families of all the 11 children baptised during the year on Saturday 6 December.

A pleasing 26 people, made up of parents, children and other family members, enjoyed an afternoon of

fun, friendship and fine food in the form of delicious scones, cakes and savouries, and our thanks go to all whose efforts made the occasion such a success.

Another highlight was a gift from Fr Fred to all the children...a gingerbread man presented to them in a Nativity-themed bag.

Here, we share a selection of photographs from the event.



Above left, from left: Deb Stapleton, Colleen Sim, her daughter-in-law Alexandra and grandson Alfie, Elizabeth Taylor and, mostly obscured, her hiding daughter, Evie
Above right: The Tano family, from left, mum Ingrid, daughter Illiana, with Anne Moore and Fr Fred, and dad Chinlou and son Louie



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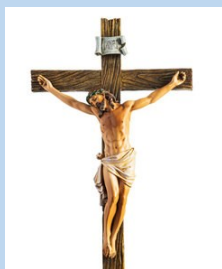
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St Matthew's Birdwood

Lot 95, Shannon Street
First & Third Sunday – 8.30am

St Joseph the Worker Lobethal

38 Ridge Road
Second, Fourth & Fifth Sunday –
8.30am

Our Lady of the Rosary Stirling East
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As this directory changes from time to time, anyone wishing to volunteer for any of the parish activities listed below is asked to please contact the parish office.

1 Wembley Avenue (PO Box 713), Bridgewater SA 5155

P: 08 8359 0674 W: www.adelaidehillsparish.com.au E: stmatthew@adelaidehillsparish.com.au

PARISH OFFICE

Parish Priest

Fr Alfred Farrugia 8359 0674

Parish Pastoral Coordinator

Cathie Oswald 8359 0674

Parish Secretary

Margaret Smitherman 8359 0674

Baptism Teams

Helen Cantwell 8390 3290
Maria Thompson 0408 898 357
Anne Moore 0417 861 373
Eric Toome 0418 896 695
Deb Stapleton 0408 835 990
Pam Broadbridge 8339 5013

Catholic Women's League

Barbara Mott (Bridgewater) 8339 1083
Anne McEvoy (Birdwood) 0438 682 784

Child Protection

Mark McGeough 0491 150 758

Children's Liturgy

Jane van Mierle 0438 723 259

Choir

Damien Mansfield 8339 4133

Christian Life Communities

Paris Huffman 0400 283 683

Ecology Group

John Leeton 0419 243 814

Faith Formation Team

Fr Fred (Chair) 8359 0674
Paris Huffman (Secretary) 0400 283 683

Finance and Maintenance (F&M) Committee

Paul Howe (Chair) 8388 5281

F&M Birdwood Contact

Gayle Raven 8389 8410

Hills Combined Christian Churches

Maria Thompson 0408 898 357

Liturgy

Birdwood and Lobethal - Fr Fred 8359 0674

Men's Spirituality Coordinators

Paul Somers 8339 5118
Dan De Fazio 8339 3393

Our Lady of the Rosary Community Representative

Debbie Somers 8339 5118

Parish Atrium

Sue Sachse 0431 117 840

Parish Facebook Page

www.facebook.com/adelaidehillsparish

Parish Pastoral Council

John Leeton (Chair) 0419 243 814

Rosary Group

Paul Anderson 0416 032 925

Sacraments

Call Parish Office 8359 0674

Baptisms
Weddings
Reconciliation
Communion to the Sick
Religious Education

St Catherine's Catholic School

22 Ayers Hill Road
Stirling SA 5152 8238 8238

Principal - John Low
School Board Chair - Ben Clements

St Matthew's Sewing Group

Stasia Duszynski 8339 4396

St Vincent de Paul Society

Dan De Fazio 8339 3393
Lea Crosby (Northern End) 0431 092 725

Social Justice Group

Cathie Oswald 0428 244 958

The Bridge

Paul Robinson (Editor) 0408 855 178

WHS Volunteer

Marianne Berry 0407 903 382