



In This Issue

Parish Assembly Report	2
Pakistan Thanks	3
Welcome, Scott	3
St Catherine's News	5
All About Advent 2025	6&7
Ecology Update	9
Preparing the Ashes	10

Pope Leo XIV's first letter to the Church

By Fr Fred

Last month, Pope Leo XIV published *Dilexi te*, which means "I have loved you" and echoes the title of Pope Francis' last encyclical letter *Dilexit Nos* ("He loved us"), on the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The title is taken from the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:9 and the exhortation is addressed "to all Christians on love for the poor," a message to the Church.

Written by Pope Francis and edited and endorsed by Pope Leo, it sets out the Catholic response to wealth and poverty. In it, Pope Leo recalls that Pope Francis had chosen to be named after Francis of Assisi after a 'Cardinal friend of his embraced him, kissed him and told him: "Do not forget the poor!"' Pope Leo also recalls that later Pope Francis had told reporters "How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!"

This exhortation is all about God's love for the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society. This is affirmed with many examples from the

scriptures, the saints and religious orders, and in the development of Catholic social teaching in dialogue and engagement with the contemporary world.

The document speaks of Jesus' identification with the hungry and marginalised, with workers and the rejected in the gospels; about St Francis and St Clare; the shared life of monastic orders and the biblical promise of liberation from oppression. It also describes the multifaceted nature of poverty in the modern world.

Social exclusion, personal fragility, lack of voice and rights are forms of poverty as well as lacking material resources.

Pope Leo urges us, with his predecessor, to avoid old criteria to hide behind the idea that things are always getting better, and to ignore the new subtle forms of poverty, which may be more dangerous.

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

Pope Leo's first letter to the Church

We must reckon with increasing inequality, globalisation of indifference and the injustices that burden women. We are reminded that Christ himself became poor, and that therefore we can see Christ in all those who are poor in our world today. We must therefore be particularly attentive to those who are most marginalised in our society and listen to the wisdom that only they can offer.

After Christianity was tolerated, the poor had a central place in monasteries and in later religious congregations. Their founders gathered friends to care for prisoners, prostitutes, refugees, orphans and uncared-for children, and people who were ill. Teaching and nursing institutions grew out of dedicated personal care for people who were poor.

Dilexi te also describes the development of Catholic Social Teaching as a story that grows from engagement with those poor impoverished in the Industrial Revolution to advocating their cause, and finally to listening to them as authorities.

Four things stand out about *Dilexi te*.

Firstly, selecting and telling stories always involves retelling them. In presenting Catholic Social Teaching, for example, *Dilexi te*, offers a summary of the Church teaching before the Second Vatican Council, emphasises the Council's attention to the

poor and devotes most attention to the Latin American conferences which emphasised the central place of the poor in the Church.

Secondly, the positions and people with whom *Dilexi te* takes issue are Catholics who disregard or minimise the central part of the poor in their faith.

Allied to them are those infected by the wider culture whose social and political views emphasise the individual over the common good, see individual and national wealth as the measure of a good society and regard the poor as defective or as expendable.

Thirdly, *Dilexi te* reminds us that in Australia, inequality and the attitudes it feeds are common. It points to the enormity of the task of moving the centre of culture from individuals and their interests to their relationships within the community.

This change is needed to notice and reach out to the poor. *Dilexi te* demonstrates how counter-cultural is the genuinely Christian response. It also makes it attractive.

Finally, the most notable feature of *Dilexi te* is that Pope Francis has not only helped publish and put his name to such a radical document but has fully endorsed it.

Fr Fred blesses parishioners with cross blessed by Pope Leo

With the 10.30am Mass at St Matthew's Bridgewater on Sunday 19 October dedicated as Jubilee Sunday, parishioners from all parts of our far-flung community joined in the celebration and stayed on afterwards for the Parish Assembly.

At the beginning, everyone gathered outside the church, prayers were recited and each parishioner was blessed by the Jubilee cross brought from Rome by Fr Fred (see pictures below). This was followed by the Jubilee Mass and prayers of intercession for the occasion.





Reflections on the Parish Assembly

By Inge Parodi



Parishioners, above, listen to the reflections on one of the four themes, while below, PPC chair John Leeton brings the Assembly to a close by thanking all for their valued participation

On Sunday 19 October 2025, our Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish came together following the 10.30am Mass for our biannual Parish Assembly.

We were delighted to welcome some 61 participants from all of our church locations, making it a truly parish-wide gathering. The morning began with community time and shared food, offering a wonderful opportunity to meet parishioners from other churches within our Adelaide Hills Catholic community. Feedback from attendees highlighted how much people appreciated these connections, strengthening our sense of community across the parish.

The Assembly focused on four key themes: Volunteering, Synodality, Community Engagement and the Future of Our Parish. Parishioners divided into discussion groups, reflecting on each theme and sharing insights and experiences.

Facilitators guided conversations thoughtfully, ensuring that all voices were heard, talk time was balanced and discussions remained on topic. The energy in the room was remarkable, with passionate participation and genuine engagement from all involved. It was inspiring to see both longstanding members and newer parishioners contributing to meaningful dialogue about the life and future of our parish.

We extend heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to the preparation and running of the Assembly. Your work in planning meetings, facilitating discussions, scribing and helping on the day ensured that the event ran smoothly. A special acknowledgment goes to Fr Fred for his steady guidance, and to Cathie Oswald for coordinating catering and preparing delicious sandwiches, which helped create a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

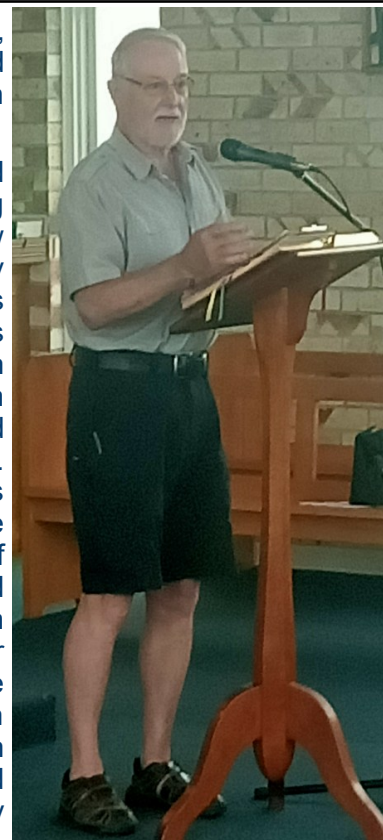
The day was a wonderful demonstration of our

collective strengths, gifts, and shared commitment to parish life.

The information and ideas gathered during the Assembly are now being carefully compiled. This includes reflections from discussion groups, evaluation feedback and volunteer information. Once this process is complete, the outcomes and plans of action will be shared with the parish community. Even for those who were unable to attend in person, they can submit reflections and so ensure that every voice is considered.

Overall, the Parish Assembly was a meaningful and energising experience. It reminded us of the strength and richness of our parish community, the importance of collaboration, and the power of listening to one another.

The Assembly not only allowed us to reflect on where we are as a parish but also to envision the path forward together. We left the day encouraged, inspired and motivated to continue growing in faith, connection and service, guided by the Holy Spirit as we shape a vibrant and inclusive future for the Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish.



Parishioner donation changes lives in Pakistan

By Fr Fred

During my recent trip home to Malta, I happened to meet Fr Gerard, who was on his annual leave from his mission in Pakistan.

I gave him 400 euros, kindly donated by an Adelaide Hills parishioner during Lent 2025, and a few weeks back, he sent me some photos and this message:

It was such an unexpected joy meeting you this morning. Attached please find some photos depicting Breakfast Club in action. In a separate post I am also sending other photos that show another service we are giving to the people.

The Lord has provided us with a large Reverse Osmosis plant that produces 700 litres of purified water daily. After school hours, we share this purified water with our neighbours since running water does not exist in homes.

Renewed thanks. Blessings.

Fr Gerard

A parishioner's generous donation has helped to fund a Breakfast Club programme in Pakistan



Scott Fisher welcomed into our Catholic community

By Debbie Somers



Scott Fisher, pictured left between acolyte Paul Anderson and Fr Fred, became a full member of the Catholic Church at a special celebration Mass at OLOR on Sunday 19 October

Scott went through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults – or RCIA - programme with Fr Fred. This was a momentous day for Scott as he received the greatest gift of all - the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself.

Big congratulations to Scott and his supportive family. Let us all keep him in our prayers.

Baptism Christmas Tea date looms

As the year draws to a close, the parish's Baptism Team invites all families whose children have been baptised in the parish to join them for a Get-Together Christmas Afternoon Tea.

It all happens in the Parish Hall at 2pm on Saturday 6 December, where St Nicholas will make an appearance!

Please RSVP by emailing Cathie Oswald at catherine@adelaidehillsparish.com.au by 3 December, indicating the number of adults and children attending.



St Catherine's Catholic School News

It has been a busy start to the term with many events and activities on the go. APRIM Carla Thomas touches on these, as well as welcomes back John Low, who returns as principal after a year contributing his leadership and expertise at CESA.

Year 1/2s Connect with Parish

The students have been learning about the special connection our school shares with St Matthew's Parish. Through stories, discussions, and reflection, they explored the vital role the parish plays in our faith community and how we come together to live out God's love. To celebrate this learning, the students created a beautiful artwork featuring St Matthew's Church, Fr Fred and the parishioners. Their artwork is a wonderful reminder of how faith, friendship and community unite us as one parish family.



Community Cookbook Contributions

Our Year 6 Captains are finalising their Community Cookbook as part of their Catholic Charities Fund-raiser. We would still love to include some of your family favourite recipes, so if you'd like to share them, please drop them off at the front office marked for Di Cook's attention. Alternatively, email them to me: cthomas@stcaths.catholic.edu.au. Thank you for supporting our students as they combine creativity, community spirit and compassion in this wonderful project!



Planting in the Butterfly Garden

At the end of Term 3, our Year 1/2 students have been busily bringing a special project to life — the creation of a Butterfly Garden! This idea grew from a spontaneous classroom experience earlier in the year when both Year 1/2 classes witnessed the transformation of a chrysalis into a butterfly and were inspired to spend the term exploring what plants and features would attract and support butterflies in our school environment.

With the generous support of John Leeton and Bunnings Mt Barker, their vision is taking shape. Students planted a variety of flowers and seeds, learning about the needs of butterflies and how we can care for their habitats. The joy and pride on their faces reflected the deep sense of ownership and connection this project has fostered. We hope the Butterfly Garden will continue to evolve in the years ahead, with future Year 1/2 classes adding their own ideas and contributions.



Inclement Weather Can't Dampen Ecology Mass Celebration

Early this term we were blessed to host a beautiful Ecology Mass to bring together our parish and school community in thanksgiving for God's creation. The Mass, indoors because of the inclement weather, provided an opportunity to strengthen our parish-school partnership and reflect on our shared commitment to caring for creation. It was wonderful to see so many staff, students, families and parishioners in attendance, made even more special with the blessing of the pets ritual before the closing of our celebration. Following the Mass, everyone enjoyed a morning tea and sausage sizzle.



Wagging tails and purrs aplenty

By Fr Fred

The unseasonal weather may have forced us indoors, but it certainly didn't stop parishioners and their pets from flocking to the Ecology Sunday Mass to enjoy the occasion and the sausage sizzle that followed.

Pictured right, Fr Fred invites parishioners and pets to come forward for a special blessing at the close of Mass.



Vinnie's Needs You!

With our current St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies) Stirling Conference president Dan De Fazio resigning from the role soon, we are on the lookout for a new president.

Dan has held this position since August 2022 and has decided to resign for personal reasons.

This creates the opportunity for someone different to bring their skills and attributes to continue doing 'Good Works' in our community. You will be supported by an experienced and knowledgeable Conference Team, including our current president, who will provide the successful candidate with an effective handover to ensure a smooth transition.

The primary function of our Stirling Conference is to provide support to those in need within our Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish area.

Please call or email Dan De Fazio for a role description.

Email: stirlingconf@svdpsa.org.au

Mobile: 0418838057



Advent – a season of waiting and preparation

By Fr Fred

Advent marks the beginning of the Church's new year and is a season of waiting and preparation.

In fact, the season of Advent focuses on Christ's threefold coming – past, present and future. We await and prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas. We hope and give thanks for Christ's presence in us and in the Word and sacraments.

We look to the future, waiting for Christ to come again. In the coming four weeks, we prepare with mounting expectation for the coming of Christ in a spirit of waiting, conversion and hope. I pray that the angels will bring you good news from heaven this Christmas season, that will gladden your heart. Blessing shall not just follow you but will work for you and your loved ones this season.

May your heart desires be granted by the Lord, and may he fill your household with the spirit of peace and joy this Christmas season. We appreciate you and want nothing but the very best for you this season.





Advent and Christmas Programme 2025

WEEKEND SUNDAY 15/16 NOVEMBER

Vinnies to launch its Christmas Appeal

SUNDAY 23 NOVEMBER

Feast of Christ the King

Distribute to each family a copy of Sunday Advent Reflections

Vinnies set up the Jesse tree

Advent Retreat

OLAH Parish Hall Bridgewater, from about 12.15pm to 2.15pm

SUNDAY 30 NOVEMBER

First Sunday of Advent

Blessing of the Advent wreath and lighting of the First Advent Candle

WEDNESDAY 3 DECEMBER

Mass/Advent Prayers

Mary O'Dea Community Centre Birdwood at 9.00am

SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER

Second Sunday of Advent (Peace)

Light the Second Candle of Advent
Launch to bring Toiletries for Charities
End of Vinnies Christmas Appeals

Stirling Christmas Pageant

We have a food stall at the Stirling Oval from 11.00am to 4.00pm

MONDAY 8 DECEMBER

Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Mass at OLOR Stirling East at 9.00am and 6.30pm

WEDNESDAY 10 DECEMBER

St Catherine's Catholic School Graduation

Mass at the school at 10.15am

FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER

Penitential Rite

St Matthew's Bridgewater at 6.30pm

SATURDAY 13 DECEMBER

Decorate church for Christmas

OLOR Stirling East from 9.00am

SUNDAY 14 DECEMBER

Third Sunday of Advent (Joy)

We light the Pink Candle
Launch of the Christmas Hamper Raffle

MONDAY 15 DECEMBER

Decorate church for Christmas

St Matthew's Bridgewater from 5.00pm

TUESDAY 16 TO WEDNESDAY 24 DECEMBER

Christmas Novena, with Mass

Tuesday 16 to Friday 19 - OLOR Stirling East at 6.00pm

Saturday 20 - Vigil Mass at St Matthew's Bridgewater at 6.00pm

Sunday 21 - during 5.30pm Mass at OLOR Stirling East

Monday 22 - during Carols by Candlelight at OLOR Stirling East at 7.00pm

Tuesday 23 - at OLOR Stirling East at 6.00pm

Wednesday 24 - at St Matthew's Bridgewater
Family Christmas Vigil Mass at 6.00pm

WEDNESDAY 17 DECEMBER

Mass/Advent Prayers

Mary O'Dea Community Centre Birdwood at 9.00am

SUNDAY 21 DECEMBER

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Love)

We light the fourth Advent candle.
Blessing of small cribs, baby Jesus

MONDAY 22 DECEMBER

Carols By Candlelight

OLOR Stirling East at 7.00pm

WEDNESDAY 24 DECEMBER

Christmas Vigil

Mass at St Matthew's Birdwood at 6.30pm

Mass at St Matthew's Bridgewater at 6.30pm

Carols and Midnight Mass at St Matthew's Bridgewater at 11.30pm

After Mass, we celebrate with cake and champagne

THURSDAY 25 DECEMBER

Christmas

Mass at St Matthew's Bridgewater at 9.00am

Mass at St Joseph the Worker Lobethal at 11.00am

WEDNESDAY 31 DECEMBER

New Year

Mass at OLOR Stirling East at 6.00pm

THURSDAY 1 JANUARY 2026

New Year

St Matthew's Bridgewater at 10.00am





Ooohs, aaahs fill hall as horses battle it out in Melbourne Cup

By Social Justice Group's Cathie Oswald

Once again, a wonderful crowd of parishioners and friends attended this year's Melbourne Cup lunch in Our Lady of the Adelaide Hills Hall.

While the cake/jam stall attracted a number of customers, most guests quickly made their way to the sweeps, hoping to draw the 'favourite'. There was particular interest in Half Yours, ridden by Mount Pleasant local, Jamie Melham.

Guests enjoyed a delicious lunch of chicken and salads, finishing with pavlova and fruit. Many of the ladies took the opportunity to wear their fanciest hat, reserved only for Melbourne Cup, and to take part in the Best Hat Parade.

Janet Harrison and Mary Way were judged to be the winners.

Finally, it was time for the big race, and the room filled with excited ooohs and aaahs as the horses competed for first place, first one in the lead, and then dropping back overtaken by another.

It was a wonderful day, raising a little over \$1,500 for the various charities supported by the Social Justice Team. My thanks to the parishioners who support us – that you come along to our various functions is appreciated, and to see you all enjoying yourself means a great deal. Thanks to the team who work tirelessly to ensure the smooth running of

the day. Finally, thanks to Fr Fred for your continued support and encouragement.

Clockwise, from top left:

Marie Bryce at the cake/Jam stall

Marianne Berry and Di Golding were kept busy running the sweep table

Fr Fred welcomes everyone ahead of the big race

Helen Cantwell takes care of raffle ticket sales

The highlight of the day as contestants line up for the 'Best Hat Parade'





At Christmas, let the words reduce, re-use and recycle resound

By the Ecology Group's John Leeton

On this anniversary, the end of the Season of Creation, Pope Leo XIV noted that we must ask ourselves: "What remains to be done? What must we do now to ensure that caring for our common home and listening to the cry of the earth and the poor do not appear as passing trends or, worse still, are seen and felt as divisive issues?"

"We cannot love God, whom we do not see, while despising His creatures. Nor can we call ourselves disciples of Jesus Christ without sharing His vision of creation and His care for all that is fragile and wounded," he added.

We're about to enter the biggest spending time of the year, when so many people are desperate and confused. We're celebrating while people across the world are hungry, scared and in desolation. That's not to say we can't enjoy our family and friends while celebrating the birth of Christ. However, in the build-up to Advent and Christmas, let the words of Reduce, Re-use and Recycle resound.

This time of year is also the start of the St Vinnie's Christmas Appeal. There will be food collection points in churches and supermarkets, and I encourage you to purchase good, non-perishable foods and drop them off at these points.

The Jesse Trees in our churches all carry tags with children's ages and genders and present a great opportunity to buy a thoughtful present for someone



less fortunate.

This extends to our loved ones – how much better will it be to buy them something that is personal, lasting? Avoid plastics, non-rechargeable batteries and all things with a short life that tend to go out of date quickly. It's far better to give a plant that the recipient can watch grow and flower, perhaps even give fruit and, in time, provide food and shelter for birds, bees and butterflies.

Other ideas include packets of seeds, seeds of goodness and kindness. Or a day-at-a-time diary and a good pen,

that not only improves the memory and promises to leave lasting thoughts but is non-electronic. Then there's the lovely act of giving an experience, such as a cooking course, a craft class, a weekend away to enjoy God's awesome creation while helping to employ people and stimulate the economy.

When it comes to packaging your presents, keep a good supply of boxes that can be used time and again, at birthdays and future Christmases.

Finally, rather than join the throngs who dump huge piles of unwanted stuff outside charities in the days after Christmas, do a bit of a spring clean around November, identify good, clean clothes, utensils and implements and deliver them to the many op shops now, so others can benefit from them during the Christmas shopping spree.

Action heroes – ordinary people with extraordinary determination

At the recent Raising Hope for Climate Justice Conference, actor and former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called Pope Leo XIV an "action hero for climate justice." Smiling, the Pope turned the attention away from himself and redirected it to the people gathered before him:

"There is indeed an action hero with us — it is all of you, who are working together to make a difference."

He concluded with a challenge that still echoes today:

"God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world He created, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters. What will be our answer?"

Our answer begins with action. Concrete actions of hope for our common home, living commitments, made by families, parishes, schools and communities across the world.

Together, we are the action heroes Pope Leo spoke of...ordinary people with extraordinary determination.



Palm and olive burning for Ash Wednesday

By Fr Fred

We begin the Holy Season of Lent on Ash Wednesday practicing contrition and confession, spiritual practices for refreshing our relationship with God.

Lent is a time to seek ease from suffering and illusions. We practice release and acceptance of actions and ideas to grow in integrity and wellbeing.

Lent lasts 40 days without Sundays, concluding on Easter morning. Based on the lunar calendar, the dates of Lent vary year to year.

Traditionally, the dried palms from the previous year's Palm Sunday are burnt to make ash for Ash Wednesday service. Burning the "triumphant" palms and olive branches to make ash is a humbling reminder of the fickle nature of humanity.

Paul Anderson, Deb Somers and I recently took the dried palms and olive branches from last year's Palm Sunday, burnt them and once ashes, things became a bit messy. That's when the ashes are poured through a strainer and into a jar, where they remain before being used at the start of Lent 2026, on Wednesday 18 February 2026.



Fr Fred and Paul Anderson, watch over the burning of the palms and olives



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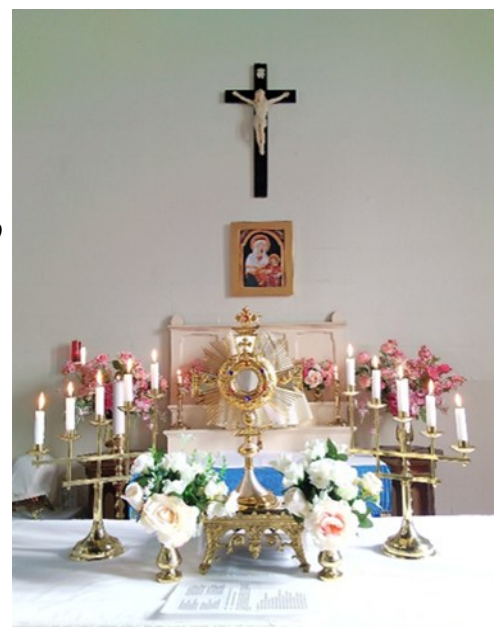
stcaths.catholic.edu.au

Adoration at OLOR

By Debbie Somers

OLOR in Stirling East played host to the Adoration and Exposure of the Blessed Sacrament last month.

It is always a very special service, all the more so during the Month of the Rosary.





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St Matthew's Bridgewater

1 Wembley Avenue
Saturday Vigil – 6pm
Sunday – 10.30am

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
135 Old Mount Barker Road
Sunday – 5.30pm

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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