



Auckland Diocesan Pastoral Council Newsletter

The Diocesan Pastoral Council met on Saturday 9 August. It was an afternoon meeting following the annual meeting of the three diocesan participatory bodies. In light of the Synod on Synodality these bodies the Council of Priests, Diocesan Administration Council and Diocesan Pastoral Council are now seen not merely as consultative entities but as essential instruments of synodal governance. The Synod emphasized that decision-making in the Church must reflect the equal dignity of all the baptized, rooted in Vatican II's ecclesiology.

Together the bodies met to explore with Bishop Steve the **Reshaping** process in light of the the Implementation of the Synod document. As part of the preparation for the DPC meeting delegates had sought feedback from Bishop Steve's Pentecost letter launching **Reshaping** and seeking guidance as to what was required to support the process. A summary of the responses can be found on the next page.



Reshaping

Diocese of Auckland

The combined meeting focused on the Diocese's commitment to Synodal **Reshaping**, emphasizing spiritual discernment, inclusive communication, and mission-centred parish life. Bishop Steve outlined key principles for the reshaping process, including listening to all voices, moving beyond parish boundaries, and fostering realistic, mission-driven strategies. He stressed the importance of six foundational strands: discernment, structures, leadership, liturgy, hospitality, and formation.

Working in groups, members explored five Synod Implementation Priorities. Discussions highlighted the need for transparency and accountability through open communication and shared responsibility. Renewing participatory bodies was seen as essential, with emphasis on forming and renewing parish pastoral councils and catechists. Developing ministries tailored to local needs included outreach to state schools and ecumenical collaboration. Cultivating synodal spirituality emerged as a call to live faith together with humility and openness, while ensuring leadership roles for non-ordained individuals focused on empowering lay leaders and families as domestic churches.

Challenges such as time constraints, financial resources, cultural barriers, and mindset shifts were acknowledged. Participants requested wider access to the "From the Letter" reflection document used during the session.

Bishop Steve concluded with words of encouragement and gratitude, affirming the collective commitment to walking together in faith. The meeting closed with a shared lunch, marking a hopeful step forward in the Diocese's synodal journey.



Other Matters



- Appreciation for Bishop Steve's leadership and vision.
- Requests for more visits to small and growing parishes.
- Concerns about parish mergers, especially where significant investments have been made.
- Need for pastoral support for clergy and lay leaders during this transition.
- Desire for inclusive consultation before implementing changes.
- Suggestions to promote vocations and replicate successful apostolates (e.g., Hearts Aflame).
- Recognition of the importance of safeguarding, liturgical formation, and cultural sensitivity.

Bishop Steve Responds



- Reshaping is a long-term, consultative journey. It is important to taking time, engaging communities in spiritual conversations, and avoiding rushed decisions to ensure no one is left behind.
- Parish mergers and new parish formations are inevitable: with a focus on sustainability and pastoral care.
- Priest availability and housing are critical concerns.
- Lay leadership and parish councils are essential.
- Financial realities must be addressed.
- The focus remains on people, not buildings:

Listening to the Diocese

Having spent time praying with and considering reports submitted from faith communities, members entered a synodal process to consider matters of the diocese. Bishop Steve then joined them to dialogue around life and concerns in the diocese.

Initial Responses to the Pentecost Letter on Reshaping

- Mixed reactions: Ranging from hope and openness to confusion, hesitation, and concern.
- Lack of clarity: Many parishioners are unsure what "Reshaping" means or how it affects them.
- Concern about parish identity: Fear of losing spiritual homes, parish mergers, and changes to Mass times.
- Need for communication: Desire for clearer, more concrete plans and regular updates.
- Positive engagement: Some parishes have begun forming councils, holding events, and discussing the implications.
- Cultural and linguistic barriers: Noted especially in ethnic communities (e.g., Tongan, Filipino, Māori).
- Generational differences: Older parishioners are more anxious about change; younger ones are more open.

Resources Requested from the Diocese to support Reshaping

1. Training & Formation

- Synodal listening and communal discernment.
- Co-responsible leadership and shared decision-making.
- Missionary discipleship (e.g., Alpha, LISS).
- Workshops on Phase 3 of Synodal Church implementation.

2. Communication & Engagement

- Clear, accessible messaging and vision.
- Posters, letters, and digital updates.
- In-person presentations from diocesan representatives.
- Translations of key documents (e.g., Tongan version of the letter).

3. Support Structures

- A dedicated Reshaping office or liaison staff.
- Parish case studies and milestone frameworks.
- Facilitated dialogue sessions and spiritual formation materials.

4. Practical & Administrative Support

- Property and maintenance reviews.
- Streamlined administrative processes.
- Financial guidance and support for sustainability.

5. Liturgical & Ministerial Support

- Music resources for parishes lacking musicians.
- Continued provision of sacraments and services.
- Training for lay ministers and new leaders.