



**ST DECLAN'S**  
—CATHOLIC CHURCH—



*bringing the love of God  
to life in people*

**MISSION PLAN**



# THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN



## This Plan

Lays out our mission anew. Our mission comes from Jesus, who calls the Church to make disciples who build the Kingdom of God through their love of God and neighbour. Our mission statement articulates a fresh expression of this ancient and timeless mission.

Defines our core values. We want to live by these values in all that we do with each other and in the service of the parish's mission.

Describes our vision for what our parish can become.

Outlines our strategy for achieving this by articulating how we form people as missionary disciples.

This plan does not outline specific actions or deadlines. Long-term strategic plans have proved ineffective when responding to rapidly changing realities in our world. Our Parish Pastoral Council and Senior Leadership Team will instead set yearly goals and actions that help us to realise our vision.

St Declan's has been a wonderful parish for over one hundred years and everything we do now and into the future will be built upon the legacy of those who have gone before us. This legacy includes previous parishioners' commitment to the Gospel, their vision, and ministry. We now find ourselves in a new cultural moment that requires a creative, imaginative, and passionate response from all of us.

# OUR MISSION

God's love brings people to the fullness of life that Jesus promised (John 10:10). People receive God's love and then are invited to respond to that love. We do this by loving God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves (1 John 4:9-11). Our parish's mission is to help people encounter God's love, and then to love God and others in return.

We have expressed our mission in the following mission statement:

*Bringing the love of God to life in people*



# OUR CORE VALUES

At St Declan's we want to live by three core values. These values already describe our community and therefore ought to shape our life and mission. We want to embody these values in all our interactions with each other and with the broader community.

### 'It's not about us'

Our mission is bigger than us because it's about God, and so we are **humble** about the good things happening in our midst (because they're really God's doing).

### 'Promise and possibility'

We are **positive** and solution-focused rather than problem-fixated.

### 'Over and above'

We don't sit on the sidelines but get involved and work hard to make things happen and to make them great. We are **generous** with our time and gifts.

**The love of God comes to life in us when we are humble, positive, and generous.**



# OUR VISION

Our vision describes our parish's aspirations. It tells us where we want to be and what we want our parish to look like in the future.

We have articulated our vision under six headings: Mission, Community, Ministry, Formation, Worship and Administration.

It's important these six elements work together so that the love of God might come to life in people.

## Mission

Mission includes evangelisation and outreach (through works of mercy and social justice)

We want to be a community:

- Where people encounter the Risen Jesus through the gift of his Holy Spirit and become his committed disciples;
- Where people, especially the poor, hurting and suffering, experience the love and mercy of God through our practical care;
- That addresses injustice locally, nationally, and globally;
- That serves the needs of the St George region and the city of Sydney;
- That is committed to ecumenism.

"Alpha's made me go from thinking about Jesus maybe once a week (on a Sunday) to every day; it made me view Easter from black and white [and] on mute, to full colour and on full volume. I also let go of many grudges I had held against people in my life and learnt to forgive them and myself." Natasha A

"On behalf of the entire JRS Australia family I want to say thank you for the incredible work your parish has done to support people seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable situations." Carolina Gottardo, Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia



## Formation

We want to be a community:

- That seeks to grow and be formed so as to richly live out Jesus' teaching;
- That trains and supports people as ministers and leaders;
- That offers a comprehensive suite of options for ongoing faith formation for people at:
  - different moments in the journey of discipleship (beginning, developing, and mature)
  - different life-stages (young people, pre-marriage, families, mid-life, elderly, etc.)

"During the Unlocking the Mysteries of the Bible course I formed friendships with the people in my group and it was great to share ideas and have those "aha!" moments with them. The readings make more sense at Mass now too. I am still nowhere near a Bible expert, but I have a more solid understanding of the Bible which I can carry with me into the future." Cassie L

## Community

We want to be a community:

- Where people experience a deep sense of belonging – of truly knowing others and being known by others through sharing the journey of faith and life together;
- Where children, youth, singles, families, and the elderly are safe, loved, respected, and welcome;
- Whose unity amidst great cultural diversity is a powerful sign of the Holy Spirit's action amongst us, and where ministry and leadership are exercised by people from diverse cultural backgrounds;
- That considers our school to be a place of mission, a ministry of the parish, and an integral part of the parish community;
- That contributes to and inspires parish renewal in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

"The experience of community has a lot to do with why Alpha, Life Groups, and the Connect Series are such a vital part of what we are trying to do here at St Declan's. It's because the love of God comes to life in us when we experience the love of one another." Fr Chris

## Worship

We want to be a community:

- That encounters the love of God through rich, prayerful, and vibrant celebrations of the Eucharist each week;
- That intentionally provides celebrations of the Eucharist to address the needs and situation of youth and families, while welcoming all people to Mass;
- That teaches people to pray, in both communal and personal settings;
- That encourages people to develop the gift of contemplation, especially through opportunities for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament;
- That intercedes for the needs of our parish and parishioners, praying especially that our mission will be fruitful.

"As we are often caught up in our busy life, there is nothing like being with Jesus in the silence of Eucharistic Adoration. He is really present in the monstrance, our eyes are fixed on him and his eyes are fixed on us with [an] immense love that no words can describe." Jean-Luc and Dora

"Mass to me has always been a place of refuge, peace, awareness, and joy. It is an opportunity to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, experience the Holy Spirit, and all this while being a part of a greater family." Anthony D



## Ministry

We want to be a community:

- Where people discover and use their gifts for and alongside others;
- Where everyone serves according to their capacity;
- Where all our ministries work together to achieve our mission;
- That gives lay people multiple opportunities to exercise the gift of leadership.

"What joy and fruitfulness we can experience when we use the gifts God has given us for his purposes!" Cathy K

## Administration

We want the operational support (financial, WH&S, Safeguarding, digital resources, etc.) for our mission to:

- Be efficient and creative in accomplishing all tasks;
- Engage strategically with technological developments to fulfil our vision (e.g. social media, live stream, online groups etc);
- Be flexible in the design and implementation of good processes;
- Establish and maintain effective systems, policies, and procedures to support the collaborative and clear exercise of our mission;
- Be undertaken by committed, capable, faithful, and trustworthy staff and volunteers.



The authentic sign of missionary discipleship is that the deepening experiences of the fruit of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22) – become evident in disciples’ lives.

“Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’”. Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, #120

“I have always been a ‘cradle Catholic’. I went to a Catholic primary school, then high school, and continued at a Catholic Uni to become a Catholic primary school teacher. I have always had my faith, but now I feel I have a proper relationship with Jesus. He is an important part of my life. The traditional Catholic guilt has gone and I feel truly loved by Jesus, and genuinely want to please him, and be his words and hands to others.” Michelle B

At St Declan’s we fulfil our mission to bring the love of God to life in people by helping them to become disciples, or followers, of Jesus.

A missionary disciple is a person whose friendship with Jesus ignites a desire to follow him completely and to share the love of God with others.

**Missionary disciples cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s action in their lives. They do this by:**

- Loving the Eucharist
- Praying daily
- Regularly celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Embracing the life, prayer, and mission of our community
- Serving within the parish
- Pursuing the life of virtue
- Knowing and loving their Catholic faith (and especially its scriptural foundation)
- Trusting in God’s providence and being generous with their gifts, time, and finances
- Sharing their faith with those who do not yet know the love of God
- Reaching out in love and service to others beyond the parish, especially the poor and marginalised

# BECOMING MISSIONARY DISCIPLES

Everyone is on a journey when it comes to faith, and we want everyone to feel welcome at St Declan’s, wherever they are on that journey. But we also think it is important to have something to aim for. That’s why we have identified what we understand missionary discipleship to mean.

# OUR DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

Here’s our strategy to help people become missionary disciples:



## Invitation

We invite family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours to join us on our live stream, in person at Mass, and especially to Alpha. We invite people to experience the love of God.

## Alpha

Alpha explores the meaning of life from a Christian perspective. It’s a great introduction to faith, or a way to take a deeper dive if you have been connected with us for a while. Alpha is often where the love of God first comes to life in people.

“I feel I now actually have a relationship with Jesus and my understanding of that relationship is constantly growing. There is much to learn. But the fact that he is part of my daily thoughts and prayers is testament to how Alpha can instigate a new or renewed relationship with God and Jesus.” Renate C

## Life Groups

We are a large parish so it’s important to have groups where people can experience face-to-face community together. Life Groups meet regularly so people can connect with each other, grow in faith, and pray together. People come alive in Life Groups as they deepen in the love of God and for each other.

“Life Group is a place where I feel at ease and comfortable talking about my love for our God without any judgement. I now see Life Group as my fortnightly bonding with my brothers and sisters in Christ.” Linda C

## Ministry

An important part of becoming a missionary disciple is serving the parish and the broader community in ministry. We want everyone to serve God in a ministry that makes the best use of their gifts and time. The love of God comes to life when we are engaged in ministry!

## Outreach

Like Jesus, his disciples are called to a preferential love for the poor, suffering, and hurting. By engaging in the works of mercy we care for people in very practical ways. We put Catholic Social Teaching into action when we try to address injustices in our local community, city, country, and world. We are called to bring the love of God to life by serving Jesus through our practical care for the least of his brothers and sisters.

## Formation

We want everyone to have the opportunity to be more deeply formed in faith. *Yatsar* courses (the Hebrew word for ‘formed’) are short programs that teach people about our Catholic faith. In Connect Groups we discuss the Sunday readings in small groups over five weeks. The love of God deepens in us as we are more fully formed as missionary disciples.

## Worship

The Sunday Eucharist is the most important place for the love of God to come to life in people. We worship God together and are sent from the Mass each week to share that love with our families, friends, colleagues, and especially the poor and suffering.





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## OUR PRAYER

Father, we thank you for your love,  
and for the many ways you have blessed our parish.

Lord Jesus, we celebrate your Risen Presence in our midst  
and especially as we gather for the Eucharist.

May we respond to your call to become joy-filled disciples.  
Teach us to become more like you  
in all that we say and do each day.

Come Holy Spirit, fill us with your gifts,  
and help us use them to fulfil your mission  
to bring the love of God to life in all people,  
especially those who are hurt or suffering in any way.

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.  
St Declan, pray for us.  
Amen.

## AN INVITATION

We invite all parishioners to contribute to our mission.

You can do this by:

- Being active members of our community
- Celebrating the Eucharist with us each Sunday
- Using your gifts in the service of others
- Supporting our mission financially
- Sharing the Good News
- Reaching out to the poor and suffering
- Praying that our parish might be all that the Lord is calling us to be.

Let Jesus use you to bring the love of God to life in people.

### St Declan's Catholic Church

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 [www.stdeclansparish.org](http://www.stdeclansparish.org)

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