

A message for parishioners at the Sunday Masses at St Cecilia's, Camberwell South on 19 October 2025, given by Trudy Maiden, who is a member of the Partnership Team:

Good morning / Good evening, everyone.

I am here with Helen Dee to talk with you about the concept of partnering between St Cecilia's Parish and St Michael's Parish, Ashburton.

Partnering means the two parishes will be co-operating closely with one another, and some things which were previously done separately, will soon be done together. Exactly which things will be done in partnership is yet to be decided, but an example might be a combined Sunday Bulletin, or joint programmes of preparation for the Sacraments.

The Parish would like you to be involved in the process of identifying possible areas of partnership activity. I will speak about how you can be involved shortly.

But first, I would like to explain the background to how we have reached this stage.

Since May 2021, the Archdiocese of Melbourne has been reviewing how it is organised. The Church today is in a very different situation from where it was decades ago. One only has to look at the declining numbers at Mass and the declining number of priests. I am sure we all recognise that. The Archdiocese therefore needs to reassess its church structures, so they are appropriate for today's reality. The aim is to foster parish communities that are viable, vibrant and vital.

One of the realities to which I just referred, is the fact that Fr Kevin McGovern's appointment as Parish Priest at St Cecilia's will end on 25 November 2026, ten years after his appointment.

Earlier this year, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese, Fr Tony Kerin, met with Fr Kevin and Fr Darien of St Michael's, and asked them to explore how the two parishes might work more closely together in partnership.

To help examine this proposal, a Partnership Team was established, comprising both Parish Priests, a representative of the Archdiocese, and three representatives from each of the two parishes. I am a St Cecilia's representative on the Partnership Team, along with Helen Dee and Paul Townshend.

The team together will seek to discern the best way forward for our communities of faith. But it cannot be done alone; it needs your input.

St Cecilia's and St Michael's parishioners are invited to contribute their ideas and thoughts, hopes and concerns, about partnering. Please, speak with any of the members of the team if you have questions, comments, or ideas.

What is heard and learned from these discussions will be very important in guiding how both parishes can work together. The consultation process will begin in a formal manner next Sunday, when members of the team will be in the narthex after Mass to hear your thoughts. However, you need not wait until next Sunday, and should feel free to contact team members at other times. Some of you may be wondering if partnering means it is inevitable that at some time in the future the two parishes will amalgamate into a single parish. It is important to stress that at this stage, we are only thinking about partnering. If, in the future, the issue of amalgamation is raised, there is a detailed process which we would have to follow. What we are considering now is partnering.

Many of us, I am sure, have wondered how long St Cecilia's could continue as a stand-alone parish. One has only to look at changes in structures in nearby parishes to see that if we are to remain a viable parish, we need to consider new ways of operating, a new way forward.

The proposal to partner with St Michael's offers us the opportunity to examine the positives and negatives of growing together, and to step out in faith as we try something new and a bit different.

Importantly, it offers us all the chance to contribute to what partnering might look like, and how it might operate. Please, see this moment as an opportunity and an invitation to have your say, and to play your part in shaping the future of St Cecilia's.

Thank you.
