

St Finbar's Church East Brighton – Plenary Council Submission:

Rules/governance

- Return to the previous translation of the language of the Mass
- the church should be more consistent in their personal decisions
- Remove / stamp-out clericalism, restructure required
- The Church needs to advertise itself in a very positive way – to deflect the prior wrongs exposed etc sexual abuse from the Royal Commission.
- The rules of the church need to be more simplified – they are too complex and strict to follow
- Laity should be involved in governance/structure
- Reservation – Bishops and church leaders making the vote
- Whole new church structure required
- No longer appropriate for an 'autocracy' to operate in a democracy
- We need to reach out to hierarchy in the church to listen to our ideas
- Educated people to be included in decision-making, advisory bodies
- Humble/servant church, less hierarchical
- Eradicate the superiority of clerical order
- The church is a global thing much broader than just a little church in Australia. The Pope has the challenge to maintain a Universal church – and this will be very difficult. What will satisfy one will offend another.
- Decisions should be made locally according to culture

Youth/children

- Get in touch with the youth who appear to be passionate about worldly issues, climate change, city building changes, band together with them in unity
- The church should become more modern so it appeals to the general public. It has to come out of the dark ages. It has become out-dated.
- The church has to adopt a humble approach – its time to get our hands dirty.
- Make the church more inclusive, open to all people
- Christians have a duty to transmit the faith to their children; eg. Sunday morning prayer with children. Cannot rely on schools to do this job, it is the responsibility of parents.
- Parish priest must be in the schools. Children often not at mass on Sunday so need to see the priest in the school during the week.

- More Catholic programs in school gathering/encouragement post school and tertiary – follow up support help with life issues.
- Structured RE for children that is relatable to them / age-appropriate
- Collaboration between parish priest and principal
- The children are the hope for the future of the church
- Hold mass for children and young families – liturgy oriented to young people, music, children’s lectionary, homily, use technology – eg. animated video of the Gospel
- How do we make the church relevant for younger generations?
- Youth groups for teens / young adults esp for those who’ve left school
- Meet with schools and get ideas
- Positive messages / stories
- Social media
- Provide structured catechism classes run by parishes to reach out to children at state schools
- Format prayers by considering children’s understanding
- Get young people involved in activities including servers doing more at mass
- Church has strict moral codes, unrealistic and this turns young people away
- Involve the children in the sacraments
- Return Catholicism to schools – parents to ensure their children follow the sacramental and devotional life
- Understanding of the church sacraments has not passed on to the children
- Better equip parents to pass on faith within family
- Not getting enough from school
 - No message passed on.
- In order for a school to have a religious name it must have religious who teach the students and provide an example by the way they live.
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Major changes

- The church has to be more flexible with its current attitude towards celibacy and selective in choosing correct candidates.
- Ordain women priests
- Allow priests to marry – issues arising:
 - How can priests look after children, family and the faithful

Parish

- Social community gathering needs to be held for support on a regular basis
- The parish council should be re-instated and involved in the decision-making process
- Stewardship committee – to give priests more information
- If a priest has absolute authority then people hold back from contributing since they could be simply vetoed
- Priest could delegate authority to capable people to deliver ideas discussed about specific issues under discussion
- The church needs more exposure to the regional bishop
- Delegation of authority – community of skills exist in each parish, invite parishioners to share their talents
- Cut out parish 'boundaries' in terms of Baptisms, schools, sacraments
- Use technology – put the message on the 'screens'
- Vinnies program for young people
- Provide parishes with guidance on setting up councils to support running of the church
- Church classes- parents involved
 - Gatherings for new comers
 - Monthly lunch for parish in hall
- Kids and parents bored
 - More attractive joyful liturgy to draw people to church.
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Sacraments

- Positive message of Sacraments needs to be pushed rather than negative
- Confusion about the ways of communion – to dip or not.
- In mixed marriages – an apology to those who have been humiliated
- Ensure a priest is available for my funeral not a lay person
- Problem – last two generations of parents don't practice their faith; parents want their children to go to catholic schools, they receive the sacraments but parents do not pass on their faith through example

Doctrine/Other

- Focus more on ecumenism by developing in conjunction with other willing Christian churches
- Mass is central to the church, so we must ensure we get full value from the mass; for example, the strength of the church in Africa where responses are sung with enthusiasm
- Consideration that priests not being the 'head' of school appointments (eg. appointing principals) but of course continuing the important role of chaplaincy in schools
- The central role is to better understand the gospel / bible.
- Prefer celibate priests and males only.
- Church needs to reach out to those who have drifted away from the church
- Church must be missionary
- Church's current crisis – and the solution – is analogous to recovering alcoholic:
 - Recognise we have a problem – we are done with that.
 - Accept responsibility – not making excuses
 - Climb the mountain of truth – look down at all the damage of what the past has done
 - Decision: What does one want my life to be?
- Pope: focus on "being a saint"
 - We are all called to be holy
 - The only great tragedy in my life is not to become a saint
 - The only thing we have to do is to become saints – and it's the simplest thing – to live with love
- The Church of England had done many things (women priests etc) that have had no impact on increasing numbers in church attendance
- The world is a very changing place – the challenges will be enormous
- Resolve problems now from bottom-up
- Conforming – church trying to be 'politically correct'
- Adult education – lifelong learning – opportunities to collaborate with the Jewish faith also
- The message is not the correct message – go back to scripture / prayer; listen to God, see what God wants
- Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance
- Challenge in Christianity – how is the Spirit moving you; how do we imbue others to follow the path we are on
- We need a plan to 'sell' religion – we believe, how can we get others to
- People have not lost their faith, but have lost their connection to the institution
- The people are the asset

- Ensure a gender balance – that women are included and seen, have women deacons
- Leadership – charisma, open-hearted, compassion
- Emphasise the church's social justice work
- Support and inclusiveness for divorcees, refugees, LGBTIQ, remarried
- Have an opinion on climate change
- God as loving, compassionate, kind; not harsh, punishing – how to develop strong personal relationship with God especially in times of struggle, pressures from society.
- Has the church moved with society? Have another look at church doctrine with new eyes
- Welcome women into decision-making roles
- Synods where laity/women are part of the decision making
- How open and flexible can church be? Small pure church or compassionate, not judgemental, open
- Formation of priests. Priests to live in parishes not 5 star living. Form to be servants.
- Link parishes to Catholic Social Services
- Some poor preaching and theology/scripture
- Church should be for the poorest of the poor, homeless, those with mental illness, aged, asylum seekers, disabled, gay
- Formation of laity including Catholic agencies, schools, parishes, welfare
- Make a more interactive service – too stuck on set words
- Re-visit the doctrines of Vatican II especially the one on the laity
- Greater integration between the Christian churches.
- Keep individual confession and have the option of Rite 2 and 3
- Encouragement of all vocations – priests to work first
- Church's view on birth control drives parents away from the church
- Bring back the catechism or another method of teaching the doctrine
- Divorcees should be allowed to receive the sacraments – individual bishops should not be allowed to bar them
- More about adult catholic education – we need the Pope to do more, to get on the front foot
- We need a plan for more vocations
- To be more welcoming to other religions
- To see more of the Bishops in the parishes
- The chaos that can occur at the sign of peace
- Bishops, on behalf of the Pope, should apologise to the noble priests whose vocation has been smeared by the paedophile scandal

- Make spiritual welfare of the victims of paedophilia a priority
- Amalgamate parishes as priests become fewer
- Encourage overseas priests to Australia
- Focus on education in faith as a cornerstone
- Technology has changed everything – how can the church use this for the good and passing on the faith
- People have to understand the foundations of the church / its history
- Current priests need more help
- Young people like doing practical things – they can do charitable works
- Orthodox religions – explore:
 - Priests are married
 - Bishops unmarried
 - Assume no sex. abuse of children there?
 - Leave it to those qualified to judge
 - St Peter was married
 - Leave father, mother and follow me
- Ecumenical – learn from all religions
- People scared and cynical of structured religions – loss of faith in them.
- More bible study for the church that doesn't cost thousands of dollars like at a university:
 - Eg. Jeff Cavins' –' Great Adventure' DVD Bible study and 'EPIC' DVD church history study.
 - Understand what they believe in, how things work, where they came from and how we got here, eg other religions, heresies etc.
 - Knowledge of all the good things God has done through the church for the salvation of the world and knowledge of all the bad where the church has failed in history and why.
 - Miracles confirmed and celebrated
 - Evidence for faith.
 - Pope's exhortations/ moral teachings don't reach the mass/ church/ poor believers
 - Only for academics at \$3000/subject eg theology of the body
 - Ecumenical discussions/groups
 - Admiration for protestant working knowledge of the bible.
 - Some people don't have the internet – hard copies in the church
 - Eg, swag magazine

- Other sheep folds – we need to get in order
- Going to church doesn't make us saints
 - Over reliance on sacraments
 - Priests duty to perform sacraments and nothing more – all over- no teaching
 - Home visits
 - Used to have 2 priest -now bogged down in administration?
 - Shortage of deacons
 - Can't get priests
 - Increase religious orders to teach in schools and help priests
 - Too much focus on priests/ dependence on sacraments/rituals.
- Education- structure- assist through nuns and deacons
- Fallen behind- time to catch up
- Young people have no time – jobs/work- they like practical tasks.
- Seminarians spend time with priests as a shadow exercise
 - Assist and learn.
- Bring nuns back even if they have to come from overseas to mission here-
- fear in the church stopping instruction about immoral behaviours in society
 - Abortion, homosexuality, homosexual marriage, euthanasia, safe schools programs
- People come to church because they want to meet Christ
 - Patronage depends on how hungry they are to meet and know Christ and understand.