



Parish Pastoral Council

Handbook

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Acknowledgement of Country

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

Archdiocese of Adelaide Vision and Mission Statements

Developed by the Interim Diocesan Pastoral Council following the 2021 Diocesan Assembly. Endorsed after consultation at the 2022 Diocesan Assembly.

VISION STATEMENT

The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide strives to be a welcoming, Christ-centred community of believers serving others.

As missionary disciples, we are committed to building up the Body of Christ by listening, discerning and growing in the Spirit, journeying together.

MISSION STATEMENT

As followers of Jesus, loved by God, nurtured and formed in community we are called to be:

- > Sharers of faith, hope and love*
- > Builders of bridges*
- > Healers of broken relationships*
- > Agents of transformation in our world*



**Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide
Commitment Statement:**

***Safeguarding Our Children
and Young People***

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'

Matthew 19:14

Created in the image of God, all children and young people are most precious and sacred, with voices that must be heard, respected, and valued. Accordingly, we, in the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide are committed to the care, wellbeing and protection of our children and young people.

We support the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the foundation for child protection and believe that all children and young people have the right to be safe, happy, and healthy. We are committed to being an inclusive, culturally diverse, and resilient Church where the children of God can flourish.

Our Church strives to enable and empower children and young people to be part of the Kingdom of God as a safe and secure home. We are committed to a shared responsibility for a culture of safety and have a zero tolerance to any form of abuse or harm. This commitment is underpinned by robust, responsive, and effective policies and procedures.

Approved By:

Date: **22/08/2025**

+ *Pat O'Regan*

Archbishop of Adelaide

**Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide
Commitment Statement:**

***Safeguarding
Our Adults at Risk***

***Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I
am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

Isaiah 41:10

The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide is committed to ensuring the inherent dignity and safety of all persons is upheld. We have a zero tolerance to any form of abuse or harm and we are committed to ensuring that all who are vulnerable feel included, safe, respected, protected, and supported whilst in our care.

We recognise that the care for all is everyone's responsibility and strive to be a community where safeguarding is actively promoted and a community where a culture and environment of safety and care is fostered across all our spaces.

Our Church mandates the active participation of all leaders, clergy, employees, and volunteers to work collaboratively toward embedding its robust, responsive, and effective policy and procedures to ensure the ongoing emotional, spiritual, and physical safety of all.

Approved By:

Date: **22/08/2025**

+ *Pat O'Regan*

Archbishop of Adelaide

Archdiocesan Commitment to Ecological Conversion

The Archdiocese has a continued commitment to Ecological Conversion. The council for Integral Ecology provides leadership in this area and continues to develop strategies for further engagement.

It is recommended that parishes consider this dimension as part of its parish pastoral council strategic planning and regular meeting processes.



Introduction

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis has drawn us to a deeper understanding of what it means to be church. Specifically, the Holy Father has brought to our attention the ancient concept of synodality. The word synodality comes from the ancient Greek *syn hodos*, which can be translated as 'together on the way'. This word evokes images of pilgrimage in the company of others. To be a synodal church we must seek new forms of leadership that embrace collaboration and co-responsibility shared between the ordained and the laity. It is a way of being church which seeks to listen deeply to all people, and to work together for the full participation of all in the mission of the Church in the world today.

The Parish Pastoral Council is considered a 'synodal body' and is one of the most visible expressions of synodality at the local level. The PPC is also responsible for the development of synodality in all areas of the life of the parish, to foster communities that are truly 'together on the way': Women and men, lay and ordained, prayerfully discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit through the lives of people in the community; to exercise leadership through collaborative decision-making which seeks to build up the community by recognising and calling upon the gifts of its members; to develop ways to accompany those inside and outside the worshipping community through the journey of life, and offering invitation and welcome which prepare all people for an encounter with Christ.

The guidelines and recommendations in this handbook are designed to serve this vision of the Church. It is up to you, the members of the Parish Pastoral Council, to interpret this vision in the context of your community and bring it to life.



About the Archdiocese of Adelaide

Facts about the Archdiocese of Adelaide (ABS Census data, 2021):

253,871

Catholics, which makes up 15.7% of the total population

40 YEARS OLD

Average Age

102,298

Catholic Families

29,819

Catholics live alone

73,290

Catholics were born overseas

54.4%

Catholic students attend Catholic Schools



56 Parishes &
125 Mass Centres



101
Catholic
Schools



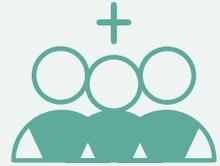
137
Priests



13 Permanent
Deacons



158 Religious
Sisters



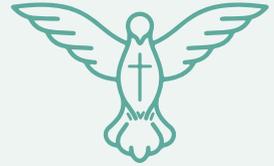
16 Religious
Brothers



1686
Baptisms



302
Marriages



1545
Confirmations



1503 First
Communions



996
Funerals



4 Eparchy and
22 Migrant
Chaplaincies &
Communities

The Archdiocese and the Parish

- A) A diocese/archdiocese is “a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a Bishop to be nurtured by him with the cooperation of the presbyterium in such a way that remaining close to its pastor and gathered by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular Church.” (c.369)
- B) “A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor as its proper pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop.” (c. 515)
- C) “As a general rule, a parish is to be territorial, that is, it is to embrace all Christ’s faithful of a given territory. The parishioners are not just those who attend Mass or are involved in the life of the parish in some other way, but every Catholic and non-Catholic living within the parish’s boundaries. Where it is useful, however, personal parishes are to be established, determined by reason of the rite, language or nationality of Christ’s faithful or a certain territory or on some other basis.” (c.518)

People may choose to belong to a parish other than the one they reside in, and the parish may choose to reach out beyond its borders in particular cases. The focus of the parish is on the people living within its boundaries, this is its mission ground, this is where it is given the responsibility by the bishop to make the Church present in all its richness.

- D) In the Archdiocese of Adelaide, the Archbishop has developed deaneries, geographical groupings of parishes, to enable parishes, priests and people to further support each other by identifying and sharing resources and a common faith at a local level. Each deanery has an appointed dean, usually a senior priest.
 - a. Eastern Deanery
 - b. Western Deanery
 - c. Southern Deanery
 - d. Northern Deanery
 - e. North Eastern Deanery
 - f. Mid-North Deanery
 - g. South Eastern Deanery



Purpose of the Parish Pastoral Council

A) The parish, like the whole Church, is being urged by the Holy Spirit on a journey towards the fulfillment of the Reign of God. On this journey the role of the Parish Pastoral Council is to participate in God's mission to live and communicate the love and example of Christ in the world around us. The PPC is:

- an **expression of commitment to the journey of synodality** in the parish.
- a **major parish body which exercises leadership** under the authority of the parish priest by investigating, considering and proposing practical priorities and strategies about the spiritual and pastoral life and activity in the parish;
- a **community of dialogue, reflection and discernment** which seeks and listens to the voices of all in the local Church and the people of this part of the world;
- a **consultative body in partnership with other parish bodies** to support the parish priest, parish leadership and other bodies in their local church leadership roles.

B) The council fosters relationships with other parishes, especially those within its own deanery, and with other faith communities.



Pastoral Planning

“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. ... If the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few”.

(Pope Francis in his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*)

A) Pastoral Planning:

- is the work of the parish pastoral council.
- is the action of the Church to enable it to animate its mission.
- is not theoretical, it is about *this* particular community dealing with *this* reality in these times.
- deals with issues such as care of the sick, faith formation, welcome, etc.
- is guided by the values, principles and goals of the gospel including compassion, inclusivity, justice, option for the poor, love of neighbour, trust in God.
- is shaped by the *spirituality of communion*. (i.e. all of us in the Church are in communion with one another through Christ, make up the body of Christ, and whatever touches one of us touches all of us; have different gifts, roles and functions within the body of Christ, and this is part of our strength, do not discern that any person or role in this communion is more precious to God than any other.)
- is an expression of *synodality*, being ‘together on the way’ as a community. We listen, discern and accompany one another along the lifelong journey of faith and mission in the parish and the world beyond. There is a particular emphasis on the accompaniment of those on the peripheries (e.g. the home-bound and isolated, the disengaged, the young, etc.).

B) Consultation and Discernment

The council takes seriously discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit, and it does this through prayer and (because the Spirit moves clearly in the lives of all God's people) through consultation. The council consults with the parish as widely as it can whenever appropriate, firmly believing the consultation will lead to better decision-making.

Consultation needs a transparent process with all information on the table.

Consultation is the action of seeking advice and is not the same as taking a vote - the council still has the responsibility for making recommendation of the final decision to the Parish Priest.

C) Participation

The council leads the whole parish towards involvement in the mission of Christ by empowering parishioners to collaborate in different ways in the work of the Church. True collaboration means to work together, side by side, with respect for the other.

'Empowering' means encouraging people to use their gifts in the work of the parish, trusting them and ensuring they have the necessary resources, authority and opportunity to do what they are setting out to do.

D) Vision and Mission Statements

A parish vision statement is a reminder of what we aspire to be. If it is to be a 'living' statement then it needs to be very brief, just a short sentence or phrase, and capture the essence of what the parish is striving to be. Such a statement, if it is to truly represent the yearning of the parish, may take time to develop, and the PPC leads that process.

From this vision can flow a mission statement outlining hopes for the different areas of parish life (liturgy, education, outreach, youth, etc.)

Examples of **vision** and **mission** statements are:

'A diverse, welcoming, Eucharistic community in Christ seeking to live out the Kingdom of God.' - Adelaide Cathedral Parish

'Through faith we build a community of humble, just and compassionate people of God by reaching out to all.' - Aberfoyle Park

Membership of the Parish Pastoral Council

- A) The Parish Pastoral Council is a council of the whole church, including clergy, religious, pastoral workers and other parishioners working together for the good of the parish.
- B) The Parish Priest oversees the council and the selection of its members (see *pages 20-21* for a recommended process for membership selection).
- C) In some cases, those employed in Catholic communities in its pastoral life may be members of the council (e.g. a pastoral associate, school principal, APRIM) (Can. 512.2). Pastoral leaders employed or volunteer, not on the council may be invited to provide input or to report from time to time.
- D) Lay members make up the majority of the council.
- E) Vacancies are filled as soon as possible by appointment.
- F) Membership of the council should reflect the fullness and reality of the life of the parish. A diversity of age, culture, gender, etc. should be considered (c 512.2).
- G) While the council is not made up of representatives from particular parish groups, it is prudent for the council to establish firm links to the Parish Finance Council, Catholic school(s) and other major groups.
- H) In some instances where parish boundaries are significant, council membership represents specific areas of the parish, areas that define the geographic focus of pastoral care – (e.g. rural parishes with a number of separate townships or Mass centres may have representatives from the townships).

Personal Attributes Necessary for Members of the Parish Pastoral Council

Members need to have the following personal attributes:



a baptised person of faith and involved in the Catholic community



a commitment to synodality



a preparedness and ability to be present at each meeting of the Council



a preparedness to continue or to take up the consultative process with their community base



members must also hold a current Working with Children Check and signed Code of Conduct

Term Lengths

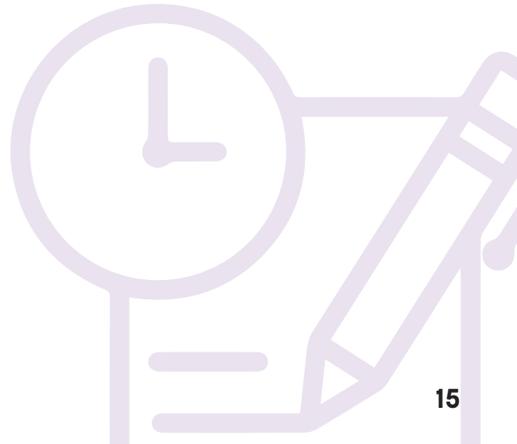
Term lengths for members should be determined by the PPC. It is recommended that the terms be either 2-year or 3-year periods.

Ideally, the PPC should remain unchanged for a 2-year period. After 2 years, at least one third of the membership should change.

No member should serve more than 6 years. After a break of at least one year members may be reselected.

The Executive of the PPC (which is made up of the Parish Priest, the Chair, the deputy Chair and the Secretary) may fill any casual vacancy by invitation. These terms also apply to the Chair and Secretary (where the secretary is an elected member of the PPC). See section 5

We recognise that this is an ideal and may not be feasible in every situation, especially in our rural parishes.



Parish Pastoral Council Structures

A) *The Executive* is the leadership group of the PPC;

- it is generally made up of the chair, deputy chair, secretary and parish priest.
- it prepares the meeting agenda,
- deals with issues as necessary between meetings
- and fosters the development of the PPC's leadership role in the parish;
- to track the terms of members, facilitate the recruitment of new member, and acknowledge the service of outgoing members.

B) *Task/Work Groups* are a means by which the PPC draws parishioners into parish activities – many parishioners are unable to make the time commitment to join a parish group but are willing to be part of a task group that has a specific task to perform in a particular period of time.

C) *Charter/Guidelines* is provided through the Archdiocesan norms for Parish Pastoral Councils.

D) Some PPCs may divide the work up with *portfolios*. PPC members choose to focus on one of a handful of parish pastoral portfolios (e.g. Pastoral Care, Liturgy, Education, Evangelization, Social Justice, Spirituality, Stewardship). The members who share a portfolio support and connect to the Council the groups already working in the area of their portfolio, and with the guidance of the Council foster new initiatives and new groups.

The Parish Pastoral Council Executive

The Parish Priest /Administrator in the PPC

- a. oversees the parish pastoral council.
- b. represents the Archbishop and is responsible to him for the life of the parish. The parish priest, as part of the council's decision-making process, ratifies recommendations of the council. Councils take the time to make most decisions by consensus rather than majority rule or unanimous agreement.
- c. brings the wisdom of the Catholic Tradition to the council's discussions along with his personal practical experience of the pastoral life of the parish.
- d. attends diocesan gatherings such as Diocesan Assemblies, meetings for PPC Chairs and parish priests.

The PPC Chair

- a. Conducts PPC Meetings and Executive meetings so that they are positive and effective meetings that also build up the council (e.g. keeping the discussion on track, encouraging all members to participate, naming the decisions, actions required and outcomes).
- b. Ensures adequate time at the meeting for prayer and formation.
- c. Promotes ongoing dialogue/communication between the council and the wider parish.
- d. Liaises with the parish priest to develop a deeper understanding of the parish, and to develop the agenda for the PPC meetings.
- e. Is supported by the parish in undertaking appropriate formation.
- f. attends diocesan gatherings such as Diocesan Assemblies, meetings for PPC Chairs and parish priests.

The PPC Secretary

- a. Receives agenda items
- b. Prepare meeting agendas with Parish Priest and Chair;
- c. Keeps careful record/minutes of each meeting;
- d. Attends to and records all correspondence in and out;
- e. Distributes agenda and minutes ahead of meetings;
- f. May remind PPC at the end of the meeting of decision made and actions coming from the meeting.

Parish Pastoral Council Formation

Formation ‘provides opportunities that draw Catholics into a closer encounter with Jesus Christ, and thus ensure that we are “permanently in a state of mission.”’ (Drawn into the Joy of the Gospel)

Formation for PPCs are typically offered in different ways:

- **At PPC Meetings**
 - Prayer and reflection with scripture, theological and spiritual writings, etc.
- **PPC Reflection Days/Retreat**
- **Diocesan Gatherings**
 - PPC Chair/Parish Priest Gatherings
 - Webinars, training sessions, etc.

Parish Pastoral Council Meetings

- A) Ideally Parish Pastoral Councils meet once a month for about two hours. This can be adjusted to the needs of the parish.
- B) Meetings begin with a time of prayer and formation.
- C) The meetings of the PPC are to make a difference to the parish, members need to be conscious of how the meetings are achieving this. The agenda is to be shaped in such a way as to empower the council to truly exercise its pastoral leadership role.

D) Meetings

- focus on the pastoral life of the parish.
- discern what the Holy Spirit is calling the parish to,
- determine practical ways for the parish to live out its calling,
- plan accordingly for the newly identified initiatives necessary and evaluate the actions and direction.
- *Councils take the time to make most decisions by consensus rather than majority rule or unanimous agreement.*

E) It is not the role of the Council to 'micro-manage' issues, nor is interested in the day to day running of the parish or staffing issues. Issues of finance, property and administration are mainly the concern of the Parish Finance Council.

F) Parish group reports should only be tabled at meetings when they have a particular issue they want to bring to the PPCs attention or when the PPC has requested information.



The Agenda

- A)** PPC meetings are to make a difference to the parish, and so the agenda needs to be shaped to encourage this and to enthuse members in their involvement.
- B)** The agenda for the PPC meeting is set by the Executive after it has reflected on what is happening in the life of the parish. From that reflection the executive discerns the major issues the PPC needs to spend time with at the next meeting and shapes the agenda accordingly. The agenda will also include minutes and business arising, correspondence and reports tabled.
- C)** Minutes should be issued in a timely manner after each meeting to remind members what actions were determined along with the name of the person responsible for said actions. Progress can be reported on under issues arising at the next meeting.
- D)** The executive decides what correspondence should be dealt with at the PPC meeting, what can be dealt with before then and what can be passed on to other parish groups.
- E)** The executive discerns whether it needs to hear from any of the parish groups at the next PPC meeting.
- F)** The PPC meeting – like the Executive meeting - may also begin with some time spent reflecting on what is happening in the life of the parish and, in the light of the vision statement, what response this might call for – this can be part of the prayer/formation.
- G)** The PPC provides a brief report to the parish after each PPC meeting which covers the decisions it has made and the issues it is focusing on. Take a few moments at the end of each meeting to review the meeting and outline this report. Ideally this will be a moment that encourages members when they name what they have achieved and how the meeting has made a difference to the life of the parish. This report can be provided via the website or at the weekend Masses/ bulletin.

Sample Agenda

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
OPENING PRAYER
WELCOME**

1. Life of the Parish

- What is happening in the life of the community?
- Name the pastoral issues that arise from these stories?
- What do they call us to do?

Once we have heard the voices of the Community we bring this to prayer to discern how we meet the needs of the Community

- A)** Gospel Reflection
- B)** Specific topics of parish life
- C)** Issues arising from reports, minutes, correspondence
- D)** Ongoing issues
- E)** Specific actions
- F)** WHS
- G)** Safeguarding matters
- H)** Report to the Parish

Procedure for Changeover of Membership of the PPC

- A) **Inform the parish**, that the membership of the PPC is due for renewal. Possibilities include using the parish newsletter, addressing the community at the end of the weekend Eucharist, preparing a poster, placing a notice on the parish website and/or social media.

Provide one or two brief, constructive statements from current councillors relating to their experience of being a member of the PPC. Indicate the number of new members required.

The following week provide an outline of the role of the PPC and a brief synopsis of the achievements of the outgoing PPC. Indicate that parishioners will be invited to recommend possible members (including Self nomination) of the new PPC. Provide sample forms on the Notice boards and Web site.

For membership criteria, see *page 12*. It may be helpful to use a skills matrix to determine what is needed in potential new members. See <https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/our-works-and-community/pastoral-services/publications> for PPC resources.

- B) **Collect and collate the recommended parishioners**. A selection committee may be established, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the Parish Priest to select the members of the PPC. New member elections are NOT advised. In the case that there are not enough recommendations, additional parishioners may need to be invited to consider membership. In the case that there are more qualified recommendations than empty seats on the Council, invite all potential members to the Information Session.
- C) **Recommendation Process** - Current PPC members contact and invite all those selected from the recommendation process to an information session. This is best done face to face or over the phone. The number of times a person is recommended has no bearing on the final outcome.



- D) *Invitations to Information Sessions*** - Collect and collate the recommendations. Contact all parishioners who have been recommended and invite them to an information session, even if at this stage they decline nomination. Usually the current PPC members do contact nominees by phone or face-to-face, if possible. The personal approach is the most fruitful. In the contact, the name of the person who did the recommending (if known) is not shared. Many participants are encouraged and affirmed by the fact they were recommended.
- E) *Hold an Information Session*** for recommended parishioners. The content of this session would include:
- Prayer.
 - The current role and function of the PPC.
 - An outline of the issues, projects and achievements of the outgoing PPC.
 - Answering questions relating to the practicalities of being a member e.g. time commitment, responsibilities, qualities needed.
 - A brief sharing from the Parish Priest/ Administrator of why he values having a PPC.
 - A brief sharing from one or two members of what they have gained personally from being a member of the PPC.
- F)** Provide time for reflection, discernment and prayer about accepting or declining nomination. Participants should then share their decision with the PPC Executive either in writing or verbally. Commissioning ritual available at <https://adelaide.catholic.org.au/our-works-and-community/pastoral-services/publications>.
- G)** Commission the new PPC at the Sunday Eucharist.
- H)** Organise initial formation and orientation sessions prior to the first official meeting.



Process After Change of Membership

It is recommended that a **formation** and an **orientation** session be held at the beginning of each new term of office. The benefits include:

- a clearer understanding of the role of the PPC and the protocols that follow
- increased efficiency of operations
- more effective pastoral ministry
- The time allotted might vary from a few hours to a full day. It may be an advantage to engage the assistance of a facilitator to assist the process

Initial Formation Session - Important aspects to include:

- Building of trust and teamwork
- Focus on the context of PPCs within the Mission of the Church
- Exploration of the PPC's role and function as outlined in the PPC Guidelines
- Importance of prayer and ongoing formation for the focus provided and the faith development that results
- Pastoral Planning development and review

Initial Orientation Session - Important aspects to include:

- Consensus approach to contributing to decision-making
- General operations
- Practicalities - agendas, minutes, meeting-times
- Selection of office bearers
- Confidentiality: While the PPC needs to be transparent to its parishioners there will be times during your term on the council where you may hear and obtain confidential and sensitive information. You are required to handle such information with the utmost confidentiality. If at any time you are found to be in breach of this obligation, this would be considered grave and may result your removal from the PPC, depending upon the circumstances of the breach. In keeping with our overall policies of the Archdiocese, the requirement of confidentiality continues indefinitely after the conclusion of your term

Resourcing Pastoral Councils

The Adelaide Archdiocese is committed to the service of Parish Pastoral Councils. The Diocesan Pastoral Services Team provides assistance and formation for all Pastoral Councils within the Archdiocese. Formation and development sessions are available to parishes upon request. Initial formation sessions are recommended when there is a significant change in PPC membership. Formation sessions are offered on a variety of topics and may be developed to address your particular needs. Regular formation sessions include:

- Vision and Mission development
- Strategic Planning
- Implementation of the outcomes of the Plenary Council and Diocesan assemblies

The Diocesan Pastoral Services Team also available provide assistance to Pastoral Councils to address the various challenges of parish and community life. The Community Life and Worship team is readily available to respond to concerns and queries of councilors as they arise.

Diocesan Gatherings for Pastoral Councils

The Archdiocese hosts two in-service training sessions for Parish Pastoral Council Chairs and Parish Priests each year. The gathering is an opportunity for chairpersons and parish priests to develop a network for personal contact and mutual sharing

The Archdiocese may also call additional meetings for PPCs to discuss particular issues or needs that arise in the life of the diocese. The agenda will always include input, interaction and a mutual sharing of experiences and ideas. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring suggestions for practical responses are included in the input so that participants return to their Pastoral Councils with concrete steps to enable action on mission.

Additional resources and references are available online at:

adelaide.catholic.org.au
adelaiddiocesanassembly.org

Light from the Southern Cross - catholic.org.au/governance



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PASTORAL
SERVICES
TEAM

Pastoral Services Team

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