

BRIGIDINE COLLEGE MISSION REPORT

2021





1 INTRODUCTION

Our mission...

Brigidine College St Ives

Enriching and enlivening our Brigidine Community in faith and service.

This calls us as a College community to instil a living and contemporary Catholic ethos modelled on Jesus Christ and the vision of Kildare Ministries in our students and staff. This strategic area will continue our work in the realms of faith, social justice and advocacy, prayer, reflection and formation.

INTRODUCTION



This is supported by the goals which:

- Strengthen the contemporary spiritual life of students so they grow in faith and hope
- Develop empathy and advocacy for those who experience social injustice or who live in the margins of society
- Inspire and nurture connection with, and understanding of, the Catholic Church and Kildare Ministries
- Enrich the faith experience through innovation in liturgical, prayer and sacramental opportunities promoting stillness and deep reflection
- Extend Religious Education to inform, engage, stimulate and challenge students
- Prioritise the professional formation of Brigidine staff as witnesses and educators in faith

The Deputy Principal Faith and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Principal and the Leadership Team oversees the implementation of the Faith Strategic Plan. The Annual Plan based on the Strategic Plan goals puts into practice due process to achieve outcomes and to embed faith in all aspects of College life.

INTRODUCTION

Liturgical life of the College



In 2021, the liturgical and prayer life of the College was intended to be vibrant and connected to young people's spirituality. Unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings continued with some liturgies proceeding as normal and others forced to adjust and change as the College was in lockdown or managing the impact of the virus.

Wonder, the value of the Kildare Ministries was unfortunately unable to be fully celebrated in activities and forums due to restrictions. It certainly was a year for making new connections and continuing to be inventive with spirituality and community connection. Wonder and Awe at Creation were explored in religious educational settings and a new 'Green Team' of student leaders was established through the student leadership process.

The Commencement Mass was celebrated as a Liturgy in 2021. Father David Ranson, the Vicar General of Broken Bay Diocese attended the liturgy and offered blessings and prayers to the community. New staff and students were welcomed and acknowledged, marking the start of a new year. Only Year 7 were physically present on this occasion and the Eucharist was not distributed. The rest of the community watched online from their home room.

All liturgies were prepared in an online format with the event either pre-filmed or shared live via Zoom to staff and students in remote locations. The use of video and other visual aspects replaced communal singing and the gathering of people for many liturgies in 2021.

In Term 1 we celebrated Ash Wednesday and the Easter Liturgy as a community. We also took part in significant celebrations to mark 200 years of Catholic Education in Australia. In March the College

sent a small delegation of student leaders to a special Mass at St Mary's Cathedral organised by the Sydney Diocese. May saw our Year 11 cohort participate in a celebratory mass at Corpus Christi Cathedral with the local primary school in attendance. Our shared celebration of the Brigidine heritage was a feature of this Mass.

In May of Term 2 we were able to have a Mother's Day Liturgy with many Brigidine mothers and carers in attendance after not being able to attend in 2020. Founders' Day at the end of Term 2 also proceeded as a communal celebration, our first in 18 months. We appreciated the presence of Father Greg Chee from Corpus Christi Parish St Ives on the day. The Mass also featured the announcement of the 2022 student leaders.

Unfortunately, Term 3 was a term of complete lockdown for the College. Online learning became the norm. With lockdown restrictions in place the Graduation Mass and celebrations were unable to be held for the Class of 2021. This was deferred to late Term 4 (post HSC examinations) where the liturgy, Graduation and formal were staged over two days in early December after the College term had ended.

During Term 3 all prayer and Chapel gatherings were done online in Year groups every Monday as part of a weekly 'Chapel' time. Prepared by the Deputy Principal Faith and Wellbeing, the short reflections picked up on key themes and offered encouragement and support to students and staff working in home isolation. College staff were inventive with online prayers and video items during these occasions.

In Term 4 restrictions continued to limit liturgical gatherings and whole school events. Rules limiting cohort mixing were in force. The End of Year Liturgy was conducted online and singing was limited to pre-recorded items.

2 PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY

Students

Retreats continued to offer quality reflection and service time for the girls.

Year 10 participated in a spirituality retreat in Term 4. This retreat held at Naamaroo Conference Centre was restricted by COVID-19 guidelines with no overnight stays allowed. Students were provided with the opportunity to reflect on their life's journey and experiences, their relationships with others, their families and God. This was achieved by small discussion groups, personal reflection time, one on one discussion, quiet prayer time and a liturgy with the whole group. Whilst short, this experience gave the students a 'taste' of the benefits of retreat time to nurture one's inner self. The affirmation activity built a strong foundation of connection within the cohort leading into senior schooling.

Year 11 attended a Street Retreat adopting the theme My True Self, Rediscovering Myself and Others. It was intended to stimulate and engage students as they prepared for their final years of secondary education. Normally, the purpose of this experience is to assist students to recognise the importance of their holistic development, to give them further understanding of the fullness of life. In 2021 however these opportunities were limited as COVID-19 restrictions meant many service placements did not allow visitors and had difficulty opening up to students. In lieu of individual placements, the students experienced a day at the College with an emphasis on awareness of the issues of the marginalised and guest speaker presentations. The presenters from William Booth had a profound effect on the students with their open and honest personal stories. The students participated in an overnight stay at the College 'sleeping rough' and then took part in experiences and visits over two days to organisations such as 'Our Big Kitchen' and 'Kids Giving back'. In August of Term 3, this cohort again took on the special responsibility of leading the whole College in support of Homelessness Week.

Year 12 attended their retreat at Elanora in Term 1, this experience built on their Year 10 and Year 11 experiences. Through this they were able to reflect on their emerging self

in relationship to their family, peers and God. This spiritual retreat had the theme 'To Everything there is a Season.' It was designed to prepare the girls for the stresses and challenges of the HSC year and beyond. With time for a beach walk, reflection on their own lives, prayer, meditation, yoga, music therapy and special liturgies, the group encountered a deeper understanding of their faith and relationships.

For Years 7- 9, a Student Spirituality Day was unable to be organised in Semester 2 due to lockdown and COVID-19 gathering restrictions. It is hoped these essential days will return in 2022 for all students.

The normal fortnightly Year group Chapel Meetings were reimagined in 2021 with creative measures undertaken to enable time in Mentor Groups for shared prayer and reflection at the start of the day. Each Year group was led by a mentor who prepared an online presentation to share and send to all in that cohort. Teachers in the College did a terrific job in this challenging time, demonstrating creativity and connection to adolescent spirituality. The normal liturgical and seasonal framework was the basis for these reflections. In each session the focus was on providing time for peace and prayer, a stimulating and engaging reflection item (usually AV) and then purposeful prayers and reflection time.

In Term 3 during lockdown, the Deputy Principal Faith and Wellbeing led these Chapel gatherings online.



3 COMMUNITY SERVICE

Once again, COVID-19 restrictions led to many initiatives and normal outreach programs being ceased during 2021.

Unfortunately, nursing homes, special schools and other facilities were unable to take any visitors. Likewise, the College was unable to host guests or presenters for the range of community and social issues that are normally addressed at the College.

The Year 10 Community Involvement program (CIP) was reduced from the normal 20 hours of service in the community to ten. These hours were restricted to safe activities, enabling the student to do the time either at school or at home in support of the organisations and causes.



4 SOCIAL JUSTICE



In 2021, Year 12 supported an organisation called 'Street Works'. The organisation supports young people experiencing homelessness. Funds raised supported the centre to provide more caseworkers and assist a larger number of homeless young people with counselling and support. More than \$20,000 was raised which was the highest amount ever collected by Year 12 students. A great achievement in another COVID-19 affected year, where opportunities for fundraising had to be safe, well organised and creative.

Year 11 promoted the issue of homelessness in 2021. Special Homelessness Week activities saw the whole College delve into a range of activities supporting 'Dignity Dishes' cooking meals for the homeless and marginalised, or 'Days with Girls' providing support for young girls overseas with menstruation kits and other toiletries. Both aspects were very well supported and ably led by the Year 11 students in Term 4 (due to the Term 3 lockdown).

The normal Caritas collection in Lent proceeded with 'Rice Day' at the end of Term 1, raising significant funds for this important cause. In 2021, the College continued its close affiliation with 'Dignity Dishes'. With the support of the Social Justice Coordinator Ms Skye Wachter, dishes swelled in number across the College as more and more families and students came on board cooking meals for the homeless and disadvantaged in 'Dignity Dishes' care. This has been a remarkable success for all involved in another year where

so much of life was restricted and lessened due to the pandemic. Over the year it was noted that over 3,000 dishes had been cooked and prepared by our community.

The normal Year 9 Pink Day and Daffodil Days were cancelled in 2021. The students presented online items to the College community to remind them of the need for advocacy for these causes. In 2021 Year 8 supported the St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal. Clothing bags were distributed to all staff and students for collection. Year 7 coordinated Christmas hampers for families in need from St Vincent de Paul. Hampers were filled by staff and students in all Year groups in Term 4. Year 7 focused on 12 families with each Mentor Group looking after their family's needs. Every other Year group generated a large box of non-perishable goods for St Vincent de Paul to use for families at Christmas time.

Social Justice Forum

The 2021 Social Justice forum was cancelled. The social justice students took part in online forums wherever possible and encouraged student advocacy and action throughout 2021 through online presentations and assembly items. Reconciliation Week in Term 2 was recognised through a special Assembly and awareness raising activities. The movement of the College towards an effective and detailed Reconciliation Action Plan continues into 2022.

Kildare Trustees Student Forum

In Term 4, three of our senior students joined with Ms Richmond in a Zoom conference with students and staff from other Kildare Ministry schools along with the Kildare Trustees to discuss the issue of consent education and gender issues in schools for young people. It was a well-received experience for both our students and Kildare.



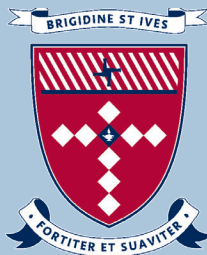


The challenges of 2021 highlighted the need for connection and time together as a community. The joy of the return to school by staff and students in Term 4 was clearly evident. The culture of connection and community within the College was strained again in 2021 and forced new ways to be explored to build community, time for reflection and new expressions of spirituality.

We hope that in 2022 restrictions will be lifted and a return to a degree of normality will be achieved.

Brian Loughland
Deputy Principal, Faith and Wellbeing





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