

Stepping Stones

A process of initial formation and ongoing support for those ministering with the dying and the bereaved



'If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the Church, all the members suffer with that member' (1 Corinthians 12:26). For this reason, those who are baptised into Christ and nourished at the same table of the Lord are responsible for one another. ... when a member of Christ's Body dies, the faithful are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love. Christian consolation is rooted in that hope that comes from faith in the saving death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian hope faces the reality of death and the anguish of grief but trusts confidently that the power of sin and death has been vanquished by the risen Lord. The Church calls each member of Christ's Body – priest, deacon, lay-person – to participate in the ministry of consolation: to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn.

Order of Christian Funerals a.8

Acknowledgement

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Background and Purpose

All those who, through Baptism, have been initiated into the community of the Church have the right and duty to participate in its life and mission as a response to the Spirit in their lives.

[See Diocesan Pastoral Plan, 1.00: Our Mission as Church] cf. LG #31

At the centre of the Church's life is mission, and a recognition that because we are baptised into the life of Christ, we are all baptised for participation in that mission.

One of the key missionary moments for parishes is their contact with the dying and the bereaved. Indeed the *Order of Christian Funerals* states that the death of a Christian is a significant event for the entire parish community. It is for this reason that since 2000, the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has offered **Stepping Stones**, as a support to those parishes who wish to initiate and/or strengthen their ministry with the dying and the bereaved.

Stepping Stones was established as a diocesan formation process for parishioners who, in collaboration with their Parish Leader and in the name of their community, minister with the dying and the bereaved. It is offered as a response to parish need and as a matter of principle, recognising that the provision of good formation for the baptised called to ministry by their community, is a justice issue: justice for the lay minister, for the community and for those with whom they will minister.

Since 2000 the *Stepping Stones* formation process has been managed and organised by a committee that was accountable to the Diocesan Liturgy Council (DLC). It has been constantly reviewed and developed in light of the signs of the times, reflection on the parish experience of bereavement ministry, our deepening appreciation of the human experience of death and grief, and our growing understanding of the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

In 2020 the DLC is seeking to replace the existing committee with a new forum that will be known as *Diocesan Liturgy Forum: Stepping Stones*. The purpose of this forum is to take responsibility for managing and renewing the *Stepping Stones* formation and ongoing support process.

The *Stepping Stones* formation and support process is shaped in accord with the following vision, mission and values.

Vision

Ministry with the dying and the bereaved will be an active, effective and accountable expression of the deeply compassionate healing ministry of Jesus in our diocese.

MISSION

The formation and on-going support of parish communities through a process which invites and accompanies participants in discerning their call to parish ministry with the dying and the bereaved in the light of the Catholic faith while building a strong and visible team ministry within the community they serve.

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WE VALUE

The dying and the bereaved ...

the sacredness of all human life

respect for the special needs of the dying and the bereaved

Reflective Ministry ...

formation as an ongoing journey of encounter with the mystery of Christ in human experience

discernment as an ongoing process of listening to God's call and responding, in conversation with the parish community and the *Stepping Stones* formation process and personnel

relationships as a key dimension of formation and on-going support for ministry:

between the parish community and those it invites to explore their call to ministry with the dying and the bereaved

between parish, participants, formation personnel and the DLC

The missionary parish working together ...

aware of the needs in its area

calling and authorising its members to reach out to the dying and the bereaved

collaborating through team ministry which builds on the strengths of different ministers

sharing and celebrating faith around experiences of dying, death and bereavement

[cf. Theological principles of the DPP]

Responsibility

The *Diocesan Liturgy Forum: Stepping Stones* is the responsibility of the DLC and is accountable to it, initially, through the Diocesan Manager of Worship and Prayer.

Membership

The forum shall have at least four members and no more than eight. Included in this number will be members of the DLC who shall be appointed. Additional to this number will be the Diocesan Manager of Worship and Prayer.

The DLC is seeking *Expressions of Interest* from members of the diocesan community who have some of the gifts, skills and capacities that will enable the forum to take responsibility for the organisation and ongoing renewal of the *Stepping Stones* process of initial formation and ongoing support:

- Faith, passion and commitment to Christ's mission
- Passion and capacity for bereavement ministry including:
 - Attention to your personal story of grief and bereavement
 - Comfort in accompanying the dying and bereaved
- Creative, strategic and critical thinking and planning
- Capacity for reflective ministry and discernment as learnt and practiced through the completion of a Clinical Pastoral Education Introductory Unit
- A heart, spirit and mind for accompanying parish communities

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- Openness to studying the *Order of Christian Funerals* and later the *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum*
- Capacity for collaboration and working as a member of a team, leaning on each other's strengths

Upon receiving *Expressions of Interest* the DLC will discern those who together form a representative group whose gifts and skills complement each other and encompass a fair selection of those listed above. Members will be appointed by the DLC.

Term

Members will be appointed for a period of two years, with the possibility of renewal for a further two years. The term of an individual member may be extended by the DLC if required for the life and ministry of the forum.

Organisation

Members will determine:

- a convenor
- the nature, frequency, time and venue for their gatherings
- the agenda and process to ensure the forum achieves its purpose
- the manner of preparing the agendas and minutes which will be tabled at the DLC meetings

The Diocesan Manager of Worship and Prayer and Administrative Support Officer will provide admin support to the forum.

Stepping Stones will be included in the annual liturgy budget. Authorisation from the Diocesan Manager of Worship and Prayer is required prior to purchase or engagement of service.

Contact

For further information please contact:

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