

MINUTES of the Extraordinary Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish Pastoral Council Meeting held Thursday, 30 April 2026

Meeting commenced: 7:00 pm

Present: Fr Tru Nguyen, Br Daniel Magadia, James Nield (Chair), Margie Hourigan (Deputy Chair), Julie Lean, Michael Carberry, Peter Osborne, Skye McPadden, Stephanie Stewart.

Apologies: Chloe Kelly, Matthew Garton, Jessica Wilson (replacement for Megan Smith), Megan Smith (on leave), Jo Reed

1. Opening & Welcome – James

James welcomed the members of the OLSH Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) to this extraordinary meeting. He explained that the session was called to address a single item: the proposed changes to the weekend Mass schedules at St. Thomas Aquinas (STA) and St. John the Apostle (SJA). As requested by Fr. Tru and the Parish Office through an out-of-session email, the current schedule of 6 Masses with overlapping times is no longer sustainable. The parish must plan for a future where possibly one priest may be regularly available. Fr Tru requested the PPC to assist with creating a revised schedule that is pastorally, liturgically, and financially sustainable. Any new timetable must:

- Be realistic for a single priest: Allowing sufficient time for travel between sites and the fulfillment of pastoral duties.
- Maintain accessibility: Providing reasonable opportunities for parishioners at both churches to attend Mass.
- Eliminate overlaps: Ensuring start times do not conflict between the two locations.

Fr Tru further requested that the PPC focus on three key actions:

1. Evaluate draft timetable options.
2. Identify primary priorities and potential concerns.
3. Outline a formal process for wider parish consultation before final decisions are made.

It was noted that the Parish Finance Committee and the Parish Liturgy Committee have also been invited to provide feedback on this matter.

2. Out-of-Session Prayer and reflection – Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-16 Reflection (James)

3. Agenda Item – Proposed changes to Weekend Mass schedules

• Background information

The current mass times and mass centre locations are provided below. Fr Fru provided attendance numbers for the last 3 years for each mass time, with the latest (5/12 October 2025) data provided below.

Mass time	Mass Centre	Attendance numbers (weekend of 5/12 October 2025)
Vigil 5pm	SJA	146-181
Vigil 6pm	STA	80-90 (Michael's anecdotal update, currently 60-70)
Sunday 8.30pm	SJA	109-111
Sunday 9am	STA	70-86 (Michael's anecdotal update, currently around 90)
Sunday 10am	SJA	200-227
Sunday 6pm	SJA	110-143

After enquiry by James, Fr. Tru confirmed that he supports reducing the weekend schedule to 4 Masses and he proposed a commencement date of 1 July 2026 for the revised timetable.

Out-of-session Submissions had been received from Michael and the following Parish Finance Committee members: Sabina Van Rooy, John Drury and Maureen Burgess, on their ideas on the proposed mass schedule changes. Additionally, Michael provided a comparative analysis of mass schedules and current staffing for 6 other combined parishes in the Canberra area, noting that all currently operate with 3 to 4 weekend Masses, with staffing ranging from 1 to 3 priests, some with parish associates and/or deacons.

- **Key guiding principles**

Following detailed discussion, the PPC established the following guiding principles and acknowledgements:

- **Clergy Wellbeing and Capacity:** The PPC acknowledges the current heavy workload placed on Fr Tru and consequently Br Daniel as well. A revised schedule must prioritise the priest(s) and associate’s wellbeing, ensuring sufficient time for liturgical preparation, pastoral duties, and the effective administration of the parish.
- **Alignment with Canberra Standards:** It is noted that most combined parishes in the Canberra area have transitioned to a 3 or 4 Mass weekend model. Moving to a 4 Mass schedule aligns OLSH with Canberra norms and ensures long-term sustainability.
- **Volunteer Optimisation:** The current 6 Mass schedule has resulted in a shortage of liturgical volunteers. Hopefully, consolidating the number of Masses will allow for a more efficient allocation of volunteers, ensuring all ministries are fully staffed and sustainable.

- **Proposed changes**

After reviewing current attendance data, overlapping mass times and logistical constraints, the PPC concluded that the transition to a 4 Mass schedule will require the removal of 1 Saturday Vigil Mass and 1 Sunday morning Mass. After significant discussion, the following draft proposed weekend mass schedule was proposed:

Current Mass time	Mass Centre	Proposed action and rationale	Proposed New Mass time
Vigil 5pm	SJA	Retain, with strong attendance numbers.	5pm (No change)
Vigil 6pm	STA	Discontinue, low attendance and redundant with proximity to SJA 5pm vigil.	To remove
Sunday 8.30pm	SJA	Discontinue, consolidated to streamline Sunday morning offerings and reduce priest workload.	To remove
Sunday 9am	STA	Retain and adjust, moved to earlier slot to provide the priest sufficient travel and pastoral time before the next mass.	To change to 8.30am
Sunday 10am	SJA	Retain and adjust, moved later to allow a sustainable 2-hour window for the priest to transition between mass centres.	To change to 10.30am
Sunday 6pm	SJA	Retain, with strong attendance and no overlapping logistical conflicts.	6pm (No change)

- **Key Improvements**

The 2-Hour Window: By shifting STA to 8:30am and SJA to 10:30am, the priest now has a 120-minute gap. This allows for the full liturgy, post Mass interaction with parishioners, and a safe travel window between the two locations.

Sustainability: Reducing the total count to 4 Masses directly addresses the goal of a sustainable 1-2 priest model while keeping the most popular times active.

Equity: The PPC noted that the proposal is equitable, as both mass centres will reduce their schedule by one mass service and have the timing of a remaining mass service adjusted.

- **Implementation Strategies and Action Plan**

Finance Committee and Liturgy Committee consultation: Fr Tru will facilitate follow up consultations with these 2 Committees in the first instance as these Committees were also tasked and subsequently provided feedback on the matter. This will need to occur as a priority in the first instance before anything else can be actioned.

Targeted Parishioner Outreach: Following detailed discussion, the PPC determined that a general parish wide consultation would likely be divisive and counterproductive. Instead, the PPC agreed to a Targeted Impact Survey focussing on parishioners directly affected by the removal of the 2 masses or the adjustment of service times. The objective of this survey would be to understand whether affected individuals intend to transition to a different time at their current

mass centre, move to the alternate mass centre, or if they risk leaving the parish. They would also be asked if they need pastoral support or “wrap around” services, such as:

- **Car-pooling initiatives** for those with transportation challenges.
- **Facilitated introductions** to help affected parishioners integrate into new Mass communities.
- **Welcome programs** at the adjusted Mass times.

Development of presentation: It was agreed that James will develop the formal presentation and communication materials outlining the rationale for the changes and the new 1 July 2026 schedule.

Announcements at weekend masses: PPC members will need to present the finalised plan at all weekend masses around mid to late May 2026. Michael (6pm) and Peter (9am) will present at the STA masses. James and Stephanie will do the SJA masses.

4. Summary and concluding prayer:

- The meeting concluded after prayer at 8.26 pm. The PPC also prayed for John Drury, who is very unwell.