

ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF
MELBOURNE

*Re-imagining
the future...*

OODTHENONG EPISCOPATE

The Archbishop of Melbourne invites you to a forum to discuss ministry in your local contexts in a post-COVID future.



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| 4 May | 2.30-4.30pm | St John's Anglican Church
269 Roslyn Rd, Highton, Geelong |
| 4 May | 7-9pm | Christ Church Newport
61 Mason St, Newport |
| 28 July | 2.30-4.30pm | Brimbank Anglican Church
18 Cemetery Rd, Keilor East |
| 28 July | 7-9pm | St John's Anglican Church
61 Main St, Diamond Creek |

Reimagining the future in the light of COVID-19

A guide for parish leaders

***For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord,
plans for your welfare and not for harm,
to give you a future with hope.***

Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)



Archbishop's commendation

Reimagining the Future in the light of COVID-19

The Journey so far

In 2019 I visited all 12 Archdeaconries in the diocese to learn how parishes are embracing the strategic focus of the diocese. During these visits, I sought feedback from both clergy and laity on these two questions:

1. What is God calling us to look like in 2030?
2. If I could make an impact in one thing, what would it be?

There was strong confirmation to ensure the diocese maintained a vibrant ministry across cultures and generations with particular ministry focus in church planting, multicultural ministry, youth ministry, and mission action planning.

As a church we are being continually called to discern how God wants us to respond. Our faith calls us to have courage in uncertain times, to remember that God is with us in the midst of turmoil. We face the future with hope, while acknowledging there are many challenging decisions to make.



The 2021 focus of our diocesan discernment will be through discussion called *Reimagining the Future*. The *Reimagining the Future* guide which the bishops will lead is designed to assist clergy and congregations to consider this question. It has been developed and used by the Diocese of Brisbane, and we are grateful for their willingness to share this resource. A key part of our response at this time is to be proactive, discussing with our church communities a range of scenarios that are possible and perhaps likely. To do this well we need engaged leadership, prayer, imagination and courage.

I commend this process to you and pray that our ministry may continue to thrive as we engage with *Reimagining the Future*.

Introduction

COVID-19 and the extended restrictions we have experienced have had a huge impact on the ministry and mission of parishes and authorised congregations. As bishops we are very aware that parishes and congregations have grappled with many challenges and also been able to take advantage of opportunities. That we are present, *making the Word of God fully known* is as important as ever.

We find ourselves in times marked by a high degree of uncertainty and ambiguity, only amplifying the many issues we faced pre-COVID-19.

We are not alone in this. The guide which follows is offered as the first step in helping parish leaders to think more about what the future might look like and how they might respond. It is an opportunity to discern the future by asking good questions, to reimagine and plan what the future might be with open minds.

You have no doubt already begun reimagining the future. Whether or not you use this guide or other material, we would appreciate you giving us an insight into your discernment.

This guide is being made available to all parishes and authorised congregations.

We look forward to discerning together with you to ensure that as a diocese we are a missional presence, continuing to *make the Word of God fully known* as we seek to:

- be a compelling and outward-looking Christian presence in our communities
- reach across boundaries of human division to serve our communities and proclaim Christ,
- be open to the Holy Spirit in transforming lives to be mature in Christ and
- use all the energy that powerfully inspires to better manage our human and capital resources.

Purpose

“Reimagining the future in the light of COVID-19” is a resource and guide for discerning what the church and our diocese might look like going into the future. This guide will help parishes across the whole of the diocese prepare for the future beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, taking into consideration the possibility of contextual changes.



This guide is designed to be worked through prayerfully by the Priest-in-Charge / Vicar / Locum, in consultation with the parish leadership team (Churchwardens / Parish Council / Assistant Ministers).

Part 2 below describes various scenarios and within each scenario, different horizons. We are in Horizon 1, impacted by the economic and health crisis of COVID-19 and the change resulting from the associated restrictions we have experienced.

This process is designed for Horizon 2 – readying. It is providing a framework for parish leadership to do preliminary work to account for what has changed and the impact of that change. It is a resource for discerning the future and getting ready for that. The episcopate looks forward to engaging with you in that discernment as appropriate.

Part 1 — Consider elements of good decision making

Good decision-making involves consideration of the following elements:

- A set of values to assess or judge if the decision is the right one for us.
- A sense of appreciation for the context the decision is made within.
- Judgement around whether the strategy is right and effective for us.

Figure 1: Elements of good decision making (Vickers' Three Judgments)

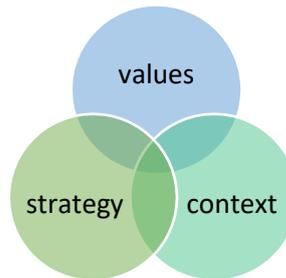


Table 1: Unpacking values, context and strategy

 <p>values</p>	<p>Consider these key values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Mission — a commitment to fulfilling our Gospel mission. • The Whole — a commitment to the wellbeing of the whole diocese. • Collaboration — a commitment to high levels of collaboration beyond church and parish boundaries. • Imagination — seeing a range of possible futures. • Flexibility — a willingness to be open to a wide variety of possible futures. • Compassion and empathy — caring for those impacted. • Outcome focused — clear, achievable, and measurable goals with timelines.
 <p>context</p>	<p>Consider the changed and changing context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and stop society marked by recurring lockdowns. • Significant impact on church finances for up to several years at both the local and diocesan level. • Likely reduction in face to face numbers for up to at least a year with the possibility that those in vulnerable groups (such as those over 70 years of age etc) may not gather or be involved in face-to-face ministry. • Changed ministry expectations from parishioners (frequency and nature of meeting; expectation of continued online ministry). • Possibility of a changed demographic. • Opportunities for ministry and outreach to the broader community. • Increased opportunities to 'show up' (be the church) and use it for growth. • Gathered worship requires physical distancing and limited numbers.
 <p>strategy</p>	<p>Consider the possibility and/or necessity of strategies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parishes finding new ways of doing church and new ways of funding. • Parishes significantly increasing collaboration, merging or closing. • Parishes with multiple centres strategically identifying true assets and long- term liabilities e.g. church properties, ministry areas. • A strategic reorganisation of parishes across the diocese. • The use of existing property assets or resources for the good of the whole and the strategic survival of parts.

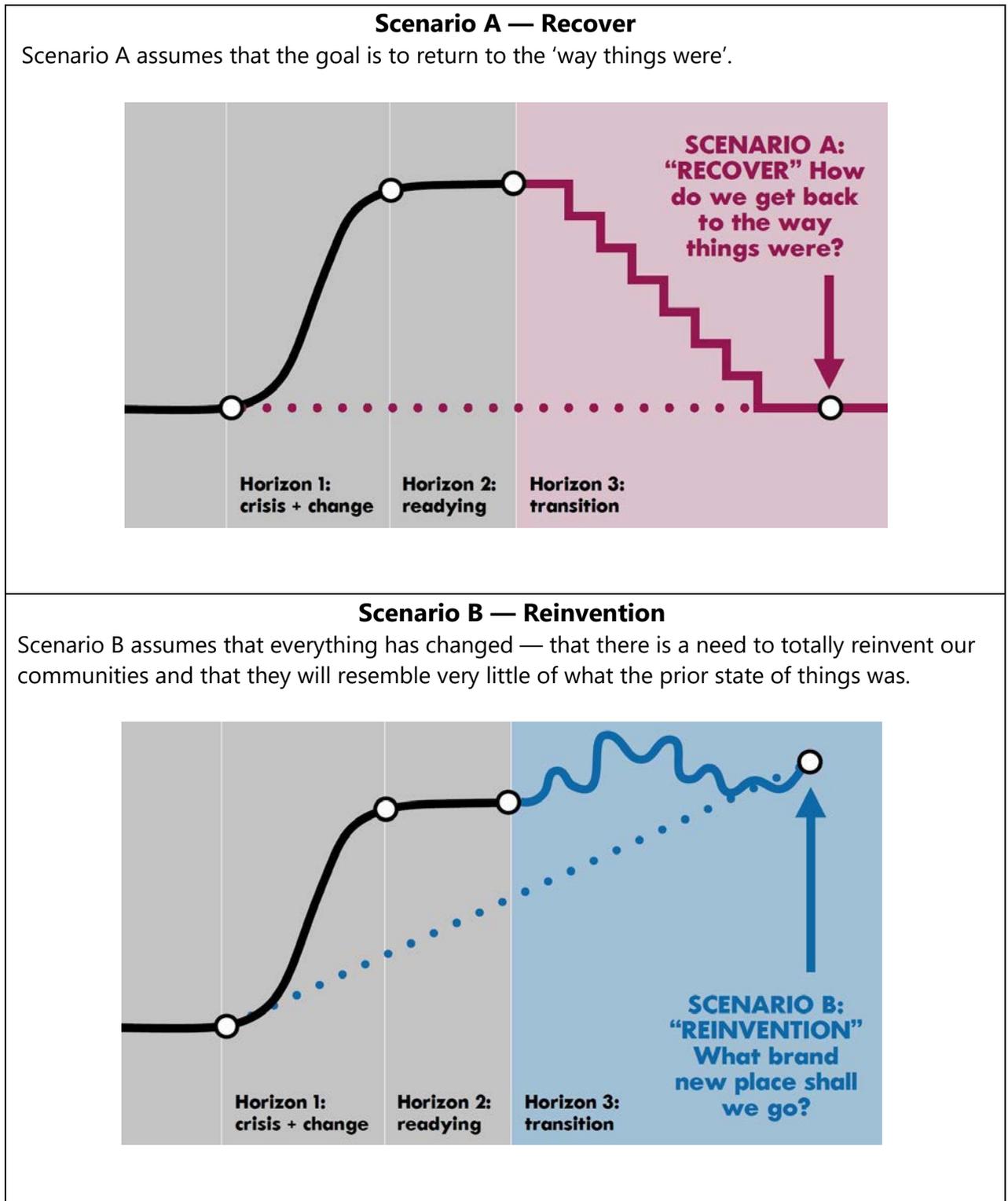
Activity

- Consider and discuss the values, context and strategies in table 1.
- Identify and discuss any other values, context and strategies that may be relevant.

Part 2 — Using crisis as an opportunity for strategic change

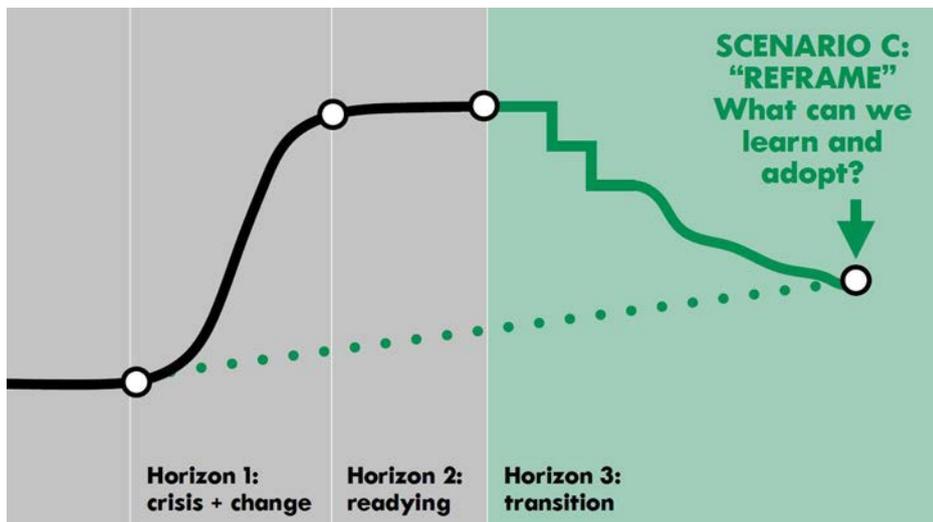
Broadly speaking, there are four different scenarios for thinking about the future of a local church community.

Table 2: Four scenarios for the future



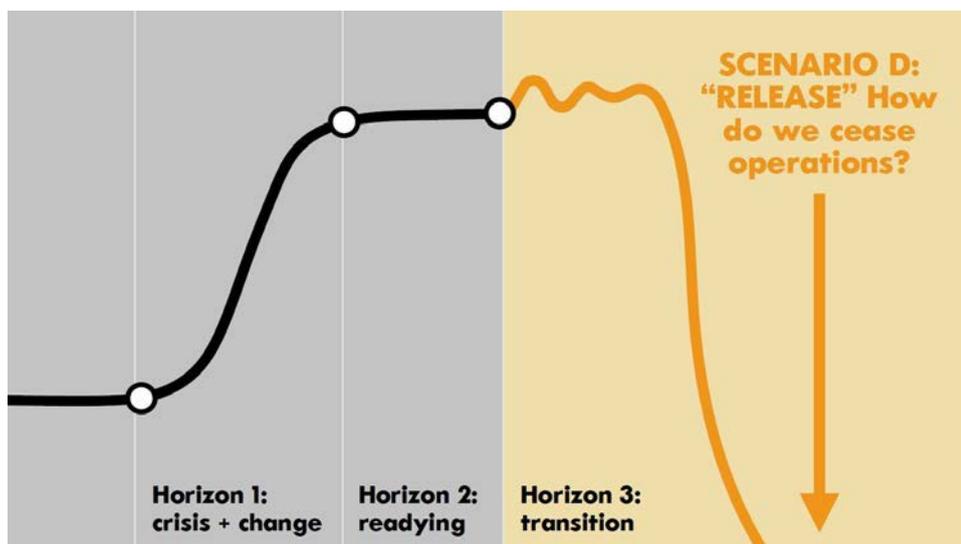
Scenario C — Reframe

Scenario C assumes that we have learnt from what has been happening, that the environment has changed, and that whilst we'll resume much of what we were doing, there is the opportunity to stop some things, change other things (particularly those changed things that have been helpful and might continue to be helpful for our mission), and start brand new things.



Scenario D — Release

Scenario D assumes that either because of the crisis, or as highlighted by the crisis, that the community should be 'released' as it is not sustainable and is unlikely to be so in its current form. Options could be to close, partner, or be open to a revitalisation.



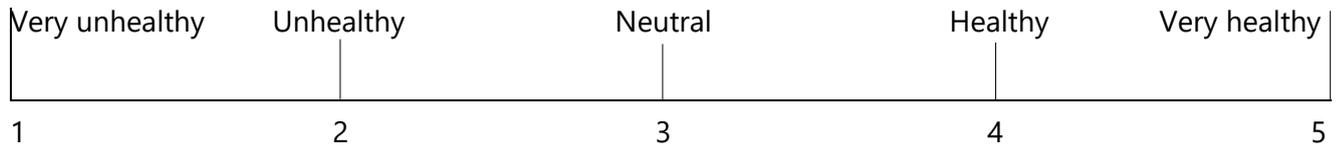
Activity

As you look at the different scenarios in Table 2, which scenario do you think is most likely for your church under what is now COVID 'Normal'?

Part 3 — Diagnosis of parish vitality (pre COVID-19 and COVID 'Normal')

Activity

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very unhealthy and 5 being very healthy, rate the health of your parish in relation to the following four factors, both pre COVID-19 and COVID 'Normal'.



	Pre COVID-19	COVID 'Normal'
Missional health <i>Is the mission clear? Is the mission realistic and achievable?</i>		
Operational health <i>Are there adequate people, structures and resources in the parish to implement the mission?</i>		
Financial health <i>Is the parish financially sustainable? See page 11 of this document for questions to ask on refreshing the budget.</i>		
Strategic health Use this self-analysis tool prepared by the bishops before answering this section: https://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Parish-Questionnaire.docx <i>How important to the region or area is the presence of your church?</i>		

The diagnosis above should be kept in mind as you delve deeper in the next section of scenario planning.

Part 4 — Delve deeper: church scenario planning

Activity

Based on the most likely scenario identified for your parish in COVID 'Normal' (scenario A, B C or D — see above, part 2, activity a), work through the questions below for the relevant scenario identified.

SCENARIO	QUESTIONS
<p>Scenario A — Recover <i>Scenario A assumes that the goal is to return to the 'way things were'.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What would be required for your church to 'recover' to its previous ministry? 2. What external support (financial or otherwise) might be needed? 3. What things might you need to do, taking into consideration the changed context? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in the immediate month ○ in the following three months ○ over the next twelve months. 4. What are the obstacles to be overcome? What would hinder you from moving past these obstacles? 5. What forces would constrain your church in returning to the 'way things were'? 6. Taking into consideration surrounding parishes, what would your case be for the strategic resourcing of your parish for the next twelve months?
<p>Scenario B — Reinvention <i>Scenario B assumes that everything has changed — that there is a need to totally reinvent our communities and that they will resemble very little of what the prior state of things was.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How could your church reinvent its ministry? What might this look like? 2. What external support (financial or otherwise) might be needed to achieve this? 3. What things might you need to do, taking into consideration the change changed context? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in the immediate month ○ in the following three months ○ over the next twelve months. 4. What are you most excited about? 5. What are the obstacles to be overcome? What would hinder you from moving past these obstacles? 6. What forces would constrain your church? 7. Taking into consideration surrounding parishes, what would your case be for the strategic resourcing of your parish for the next twelve months?

<p>Scenario C — Reframe <i>Scenario C assumes that we have learnt from what has been happening, that the environment has changed, and that whilst we'll resume much of what we were doing, there is the opportunity to stop some things, change other things (particularly those changed things that have been helpful and might continue to be helpful for our mission), and start brand new things.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How might your church reframe its ministry? What might you learn and adopt? 2. What external support (financial or otherwise might be needed to achieve this? 3. What things might you need to do, taking into consideration the changed context? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in the immediate month ○ in the following three months ○ over the next twelve months. 4. What are you most excited about? 5. What are the obstacles to be overcome? What would hinder you from moving past these obstacles? 6. What forces would constrain your church? 7. Taking into consideration surrounding parishes, what would your case be for the strategic resourcing of your parish for the next twelve months?
<p>Scenario D — Release <i>Scenario D assumes that either because of the crisis, or as highlighted by the crisis, that the community should be 'released' as it is not sustainable and is unlikely to be so in its current form. Options could be to close, partner, or be open to a revitalisation.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why might the release scenario be the best for your church? What options might work for your community to partner with others? 2. What external support might be needed to help your church community do this? 3. What obstacles might prevent the 'release' scenario being realised? What would hinder you from moving past these obstacles? 4. What emotions are involved in accepting this scenario? How might we honour these emotions while accepting the need for release? 5. What new possibilities for ministry and mission might be opened-up by accepting the release scenario? What new things might start as a result?



Part 5 – Summary document for your bishop

Once you have completed the above, please complete <https://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Part-5-Summary-sheet-to-return-to-bishop.pdf> one page summary and return it to your bishop. You can indicate what further resources and discussions will be helpful for your parish.



Appendix: Refreshing the budget

Now that Jobkeeper has finished, we encourage parishes to review the budget for the second half of this financial year (April to September 2021). Consider the first half of the financial year in each category of income and expense and re-project your budget to the end of the financial year.

We are assuming that most parishes will have their own templates and spreadsheets already, and bookkeepers and treasurers ought to be able to oversee this process.

Income

How is your offertory and electronic giving tracking?

Have attendances at services after COVID affected giving income, for the worse or better?

Has rental or op shop or other income like that returned to pre-COVID levels? Is that income stable or variable?

How is fundraising income (fetes, other events) heading? Is it on target for this financial year?

Expenditure

While most parishes have a high level of fixed costs (i.e. clergy salary, utilities, rent, insurance, etc) you should still seek to review your overall expenditure.

Is expenditure on track with budget?

Are there areas where expenditure needs to be cut back?

Are there discretionary expenses that could be put on hold (non-essential maintenance, perhaps)?

Is diocesan assessment being paid fully?

Are parish loans being repaid on time?

As with income above, re-project your expenditure budget for the remaining half of the financial year.

Do you end up with a worse budget outcome or better? Is there a deficit or surplus?

If there is a deficit, how will that be covered? Do you have reserves to pay it? If not, is there more to consider in cutting expenses? If a consideration is to cut the clergy paid days, you need to speak with your bishop sooner than later.

If the finances are very tight, you may need to project a monthly cash flow. Again, we have a template and instructions which may help in this – ask your bishop for it if needed. When do you project to run out of money, if that is the case?

If your finances look in trouble, please speak with your bishop or Archdeacon as soon as possible, for advice, suggestions and to help think through ways forward.