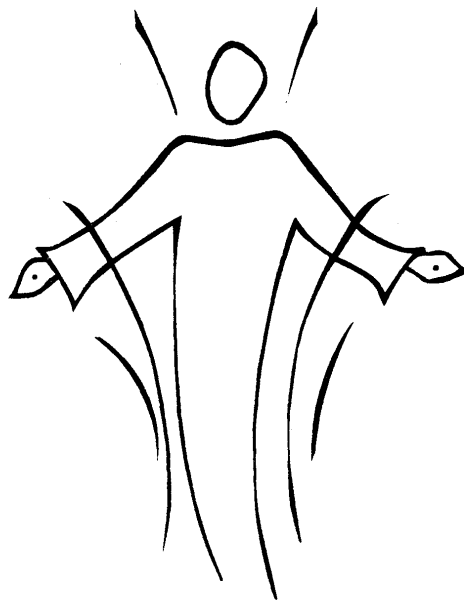
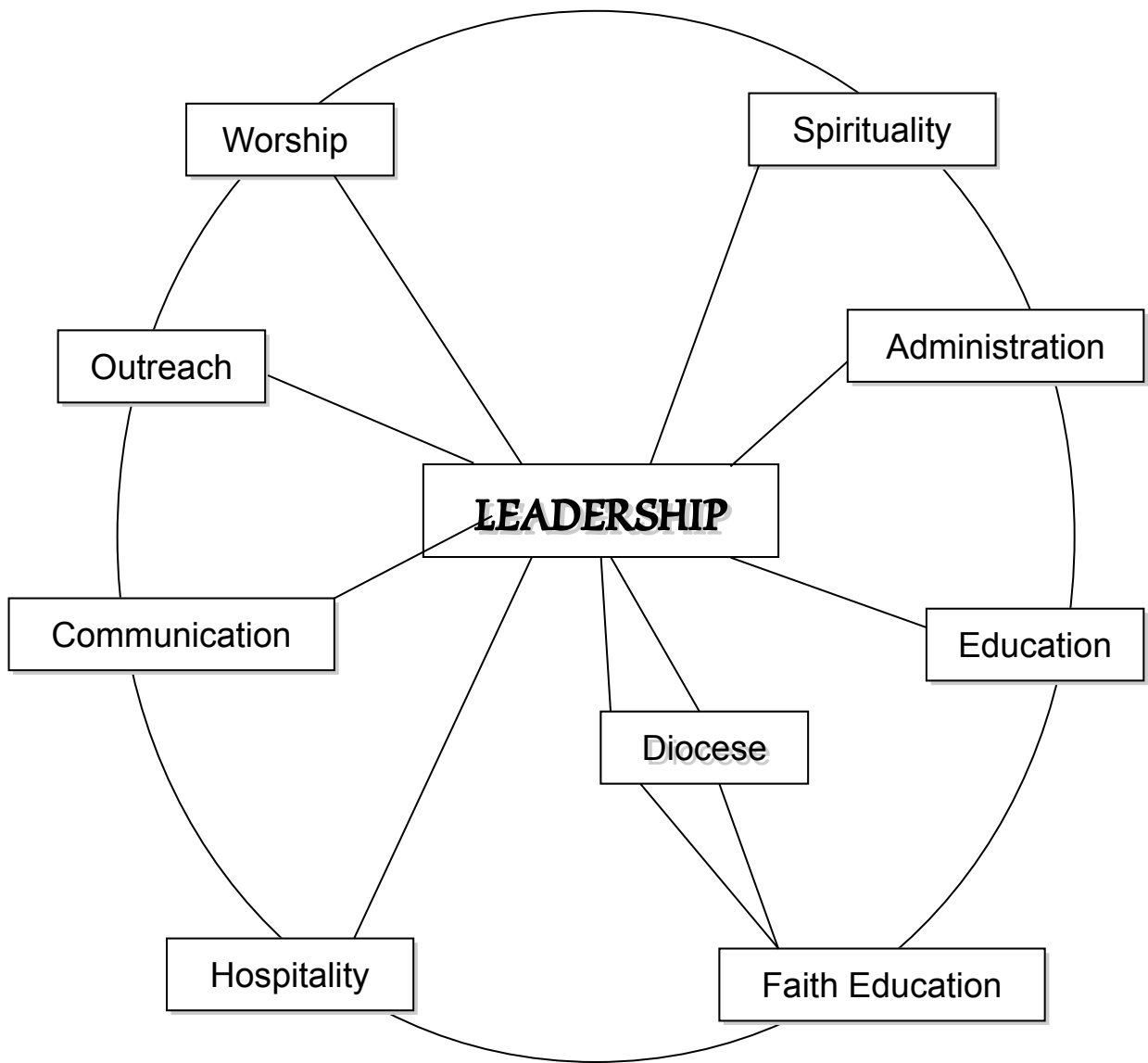


*St Thomas More's
Faith Community*

Pastoral Council Report



2009



- LEADERSHIP -

The past year has been another fulfilling one for the Pastoral Council. In August, 2008 the new members, through a process of discernment, chose their area of ministry for the next twelve months. This resulted in Denis McCarthy with the ministry of Communications, Nev Sarquis with Worship, Terry Sullivan with Administration, Cheryl Brown with Hospitality, Margret Distant with Spirituality, Bevan Devine with Adult Faith Education, Trevor Hohn with Outreach, Jeff Antonio with Education and I was elected for the ministry of Leadership. With Sr Patsy Grundy as our Pastoral Leader the pastoral council continues to work with and for our community with a great of co-operation and teamwork.

While each area of ministry has its own responsibility, the council as a whole has oversight of the whole faith community and supports and authorises initiatives that arise on a diocesan or local level.

One of the tasks this year was to address the on-going presence of a Pastoral Leader. The present contract had ceased and after a refined review of our present Leader we were please to be able to secure the renewal of Patsy' contract for another three years.

In readiness for the Diocesan gathering planned for June 2010, the Pastoral Council took part in a Diocesan Review conducted by Gary Everett and Rob McCormack. This thought provoking exercise encouraged us to appreciate how far we have developed as a community and has given us a vision of the areas we need to work on to enable our community to grow. One area of significance is our need to have plans in place for our future parish leadership – how this will function and what we will be looking for in a Pastoral Leader.

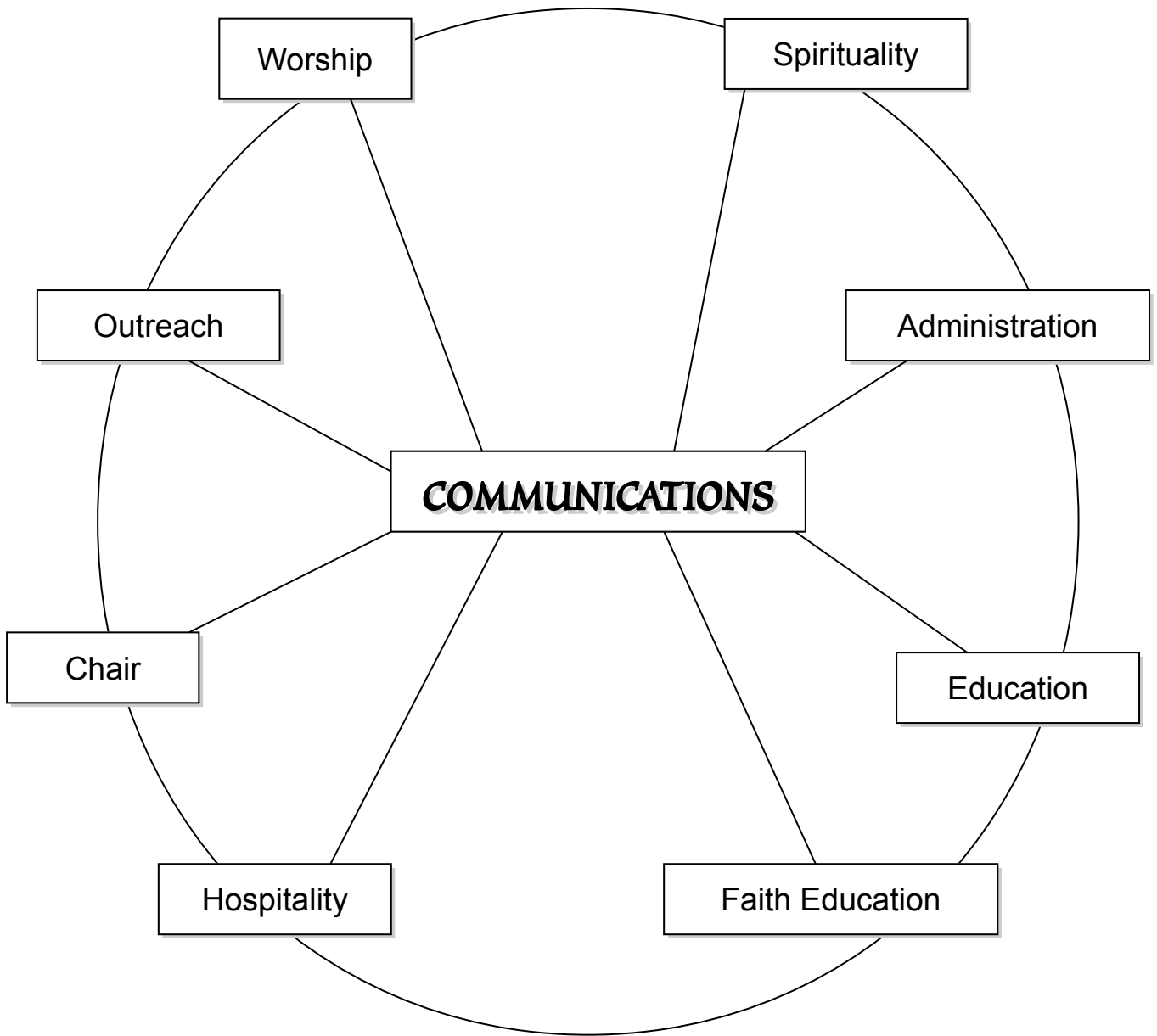
In conjunction with the Diocesan Social Justice Committee, the Council also put in motion an environmental audit of our parish. Different groups in the parish undertook areas to address and action has been taken. In line with this directive, the parish had already undertaken ways of saving energy in the parish. This has resulted in the installation of photovoltaic cells on the roof of the Church. We are grateful for those who have been active in securing a Government Grant to assist with the installation. The next objective is a Bulb Replacement Program. The existing incandescent light bulbs in the Church, Hall and Parish House will be replaced with more energy-efficient bulbs. The parish will be invited to participate in this project.

Currently the Pastoral Council is overseeing the replacement of the old flooring in the hall. The new flooring will extend the life of this valuable asset, which enables the parish community and the local community to gather for many celebrations. This is also in line with our desire to make it possible for many people to celebrate in a cost-effective venue.

It is encouraging to note that new members are being drawn to our community. There are a significant number of younger families joining in our weekly celebration of the Eucharist and our numbers at the week-end liturgy are growing. A constant comment received from new parishioners and visitors to our parish is that they feel very welcome and that there is a good 'feel' to our community. This is a positive sign of the presence of God in our midst.

I am grateful to have been able to be part of the leadership of St Thomas More's for the past three years and will continue as a member of this very vibrant faith community.

Edwina Tierney



- COMMUNICATION -

The year 2008-2009 was my third and final year in the role of Communication Minister on St Thomas More's Pastoral Council.

There is much to commend continuity of the occupancy of such a role as this allows for the development and refinement of administrative systems related to communication with Council members and the wider Faith Community.

The role fulfils the secretarial function on the Pastoral Council and this year has seen no shortage of meeting items, correspondence and at times complex management actions needing to be planned, conducted and recorded.

Among these were issues such as the review of the Pastoral Leader's contract which fell due for assessment and renewal during the year and coordination of the Pastoral Council's submission to the Personnel Board's review of the core responsibilities of Priests in the Diocese.

The parish website was completed with the assistance of office staff during the year and launched at Masses on 22 and 23 November 2008. This is proving a significant aid to communication among the Faith Community and there is a lot of scope to build on the medium's potential in promoting further community interaction. The development of staff skills in this field as well as the provision of adequate software support are essential investments in maximising the effectiveness of this resource.

An adjunct to the website has been the introduction of News Alerts which are sent periodically to parishioners' email addresses, promoting issues and providing immediate publicity to important events. This innovation in the use of contemporary technology also has significant potential for further development

Again this year there has been considerable communication by several members of the Pastoral Council in speaking at Masses on a variety of topics. This is an important role for Council members, not only in communicating about a specific topic but in presenting the face of the Pastoral Council to the Faith Community and promoting two-way communication.

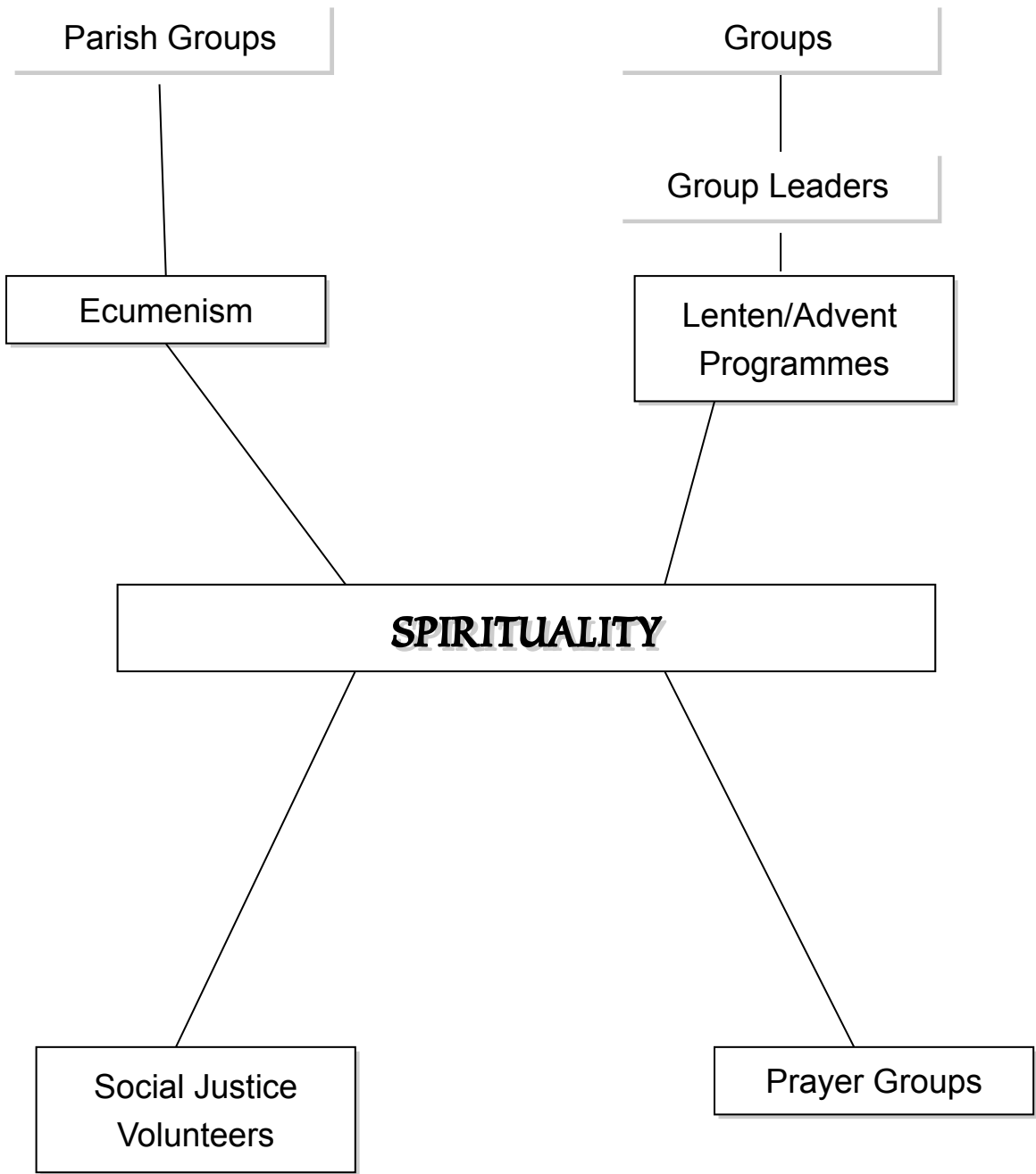
The year also saw a number of very successful social events including concerts and dinners which, although obviously a component of the Hospitality ministry, also provided further opportunities for communication with the Faith Community in presenting the Pastoral Council in action.

It has been pleasing this year to see the planning of council business and meeting agenda taking a more strategic approach as important long term issues, affecting the Church locally and more widely, are considered.

The year concluded with consideration of the important policy areas of Communication and Privacy of Information and the adoption and implementation of the policies in due course will be of significant advantage to the Faith Community.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my three years on the Pastoral Council and have learned a great deal about our Faith Community and the Church more widely. I offer the members of the incoming Pastoral Council best wishes and every success during their occupancy of such a challenging yet highly rewarding role.

Denis McCarthy



- SPIRITUALITY -

In order to ensure that the St Thomas More's Faith community gives expression to Catholic spirituality parishioners are given opportunities to develop their relationship with God, self each other and the environment. All are encouraged to be aware of the need for on-going change in church and the reason for such change. Liturgical prayer provides for the public prayer of the community and different groups in the parish provide opportunities for a variety of personal ways of praying. As the social teaching of the church is constitutive to the gospel, the Social Justice group has a very positive effect on the spirituality of our community.

Emmaus Prayer Group:

The group meets each Thursday at 10.30am. They are a close knit group of people who meet to break open the word using the following Sunday readings, so as to have a better understanding of the liturgy. They have shared personal prayer followed by a shared lunch. They then depart as good friends and carry the gospel into everyday life. All are welcome.

Meditation Group:

The Christian meditation group meets three times a week in the STM convent. It is open to all denominations and has currently a following of up to twelve people. They start with a time for quiet reflection and this is followed by ten minutes of input, currently hearing the words of John Main. Thirty minutes of meditation follows and then a reflective reading and how that affects daily life.

Mothers' Prayer Group:

Every Wednesday evening this group gets together to pray, not only for our local children and young people but for children all over the world. They are also connected with mothers' groups from all over the world which makes them quite unique. New members are also welcome.

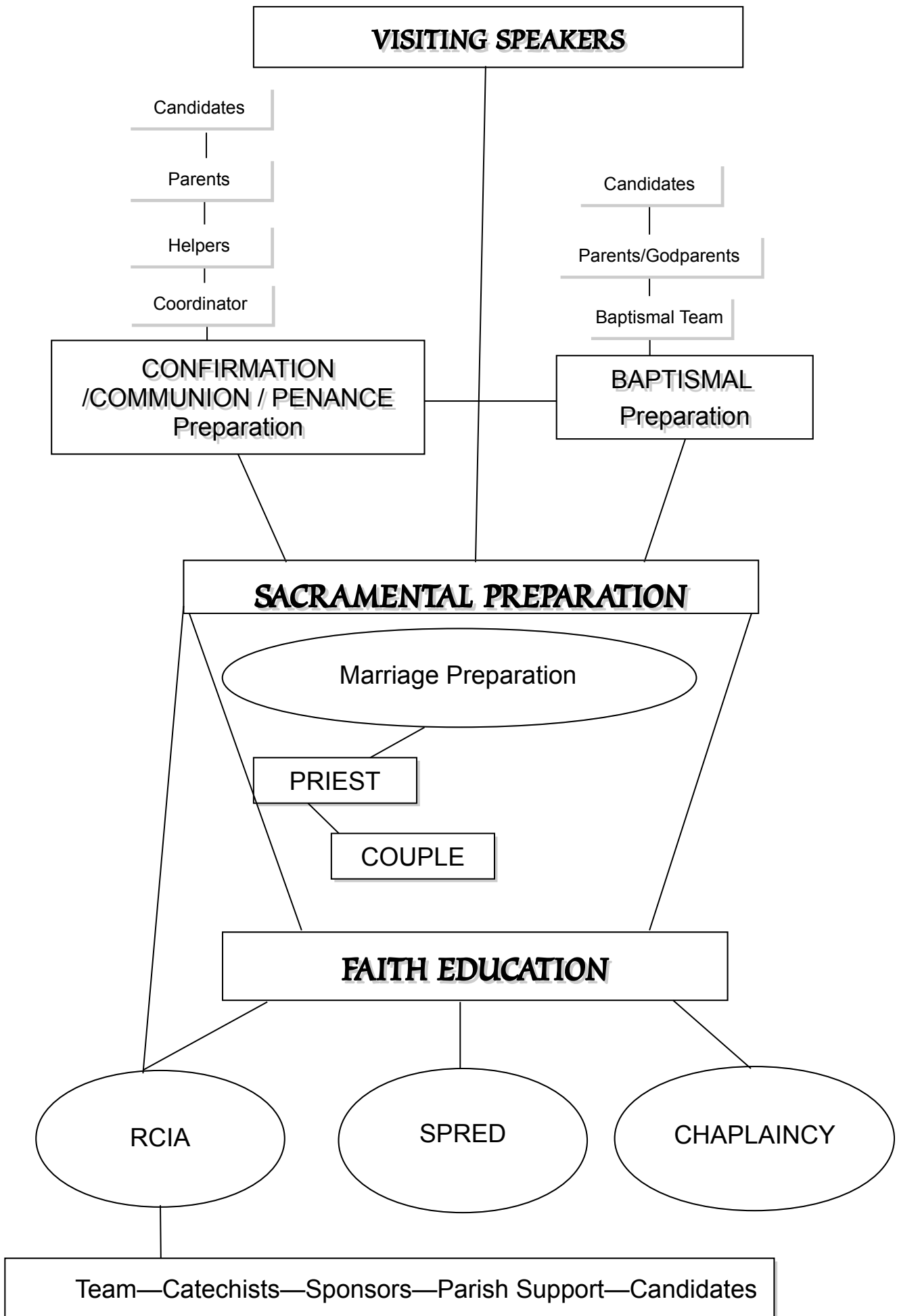
Lenten Studies:

This year a small number of groups met on a weekly basis with group discussion. They have set programs and are a great way for spiritual preparation for Easter. The use of the "Little Blue Book" and the "Little Black Book" for personal preparation has been well received. This, along with the weekly talks through the Faith Education ministry has made our Easter preparation very fulfilling.

Social Justice;

Some of the bigger issues undertaken by this group this year were, promoting environmental issues and raising awareness of our energy use, with plans to replace all light globes in the church and hall. Their biggest coup was the solar panels on the church, of which we are all very proud.

They have been involved with the 'Ada's Haven' project offering help where needed and collecting donations to help support the people in need. They have also been instrumental in making plans for our upcoming jubilee. In 2008 the group initiated a fund raising concert to support a bursary for indigenous students in the Psychology department at USQ. The parish has also undertaken to extend the Sudanese project by supporting funding for Dula training through TRAMS. The buying of Fair Trade tea and coffee is another way we contribute to workers in developing countries.



- FAITH EDUCATION -

This Ministry aims to help adults and children to grow in their understanding of contemporary concepts of the Christian faith and to develop their own spiritual awareness. With this aim in mind the following initiatives were taken in the past year:

Theology for Parishioners: The Parish offered the course in Beginning Theology which is co-ordinated through the Toowoomba Diocesan Education Centre but the response was very disappointing. Only one person showed interest so that, because a minimum group of three is needed, the course has not proceeded.

The course does take an academic approach which does not suit everyone. The Institute of Faith Education (Brisbane) has recognised this and has developed a course which has become available in the Toowoomba Diocese in the past month (July 2009). This course, The Diploma of Christian Ministry and Theology, has been designed with multiple types of learning activities and may be more appealing to parishioners. The council is considering offering this course.

Parish Renewal: This is an annual programme in which the parish offers instruction in Christian beliefs and concepts in open forums. In March-April the Parish sponsored Fr. Peter Schultz who presented a series of five two-hour evening discussions on the History of the Early Church. Rather than following a chronological outline, Peter took various concepts and outlined how they developed in the early church. Such topics ranged from the Nicene Creed to the celibacy of the priesthood. The series was well attended with in excess of 100 parishioners and visitors attending each session.

Fr. David Ranson, from the Broken Bay Diocese N.S.W. has accepted an invitation to present a series of talks on Christian Prayer and the Jubilee Year over the period Friday to Sunday in the first week of Lent 2010.

The Council determined to introduce a Spring Series of talks. Bishop Geoffrey Robinson of Sydney was approached but we were unable to match timetables. The Council has decided to reschedule this Spring series and will approach Bishop Robinson again.

Pastoral Council Formation: The councillor responsible for Faith Education led a series of twenty-minute discussions using power-point presentations at each council meeting. These were based on the book "The Heart and Soul of Parish Ministry by Regina Coll.

In addition to the above initiatives five other programmes continued to operate successfully:

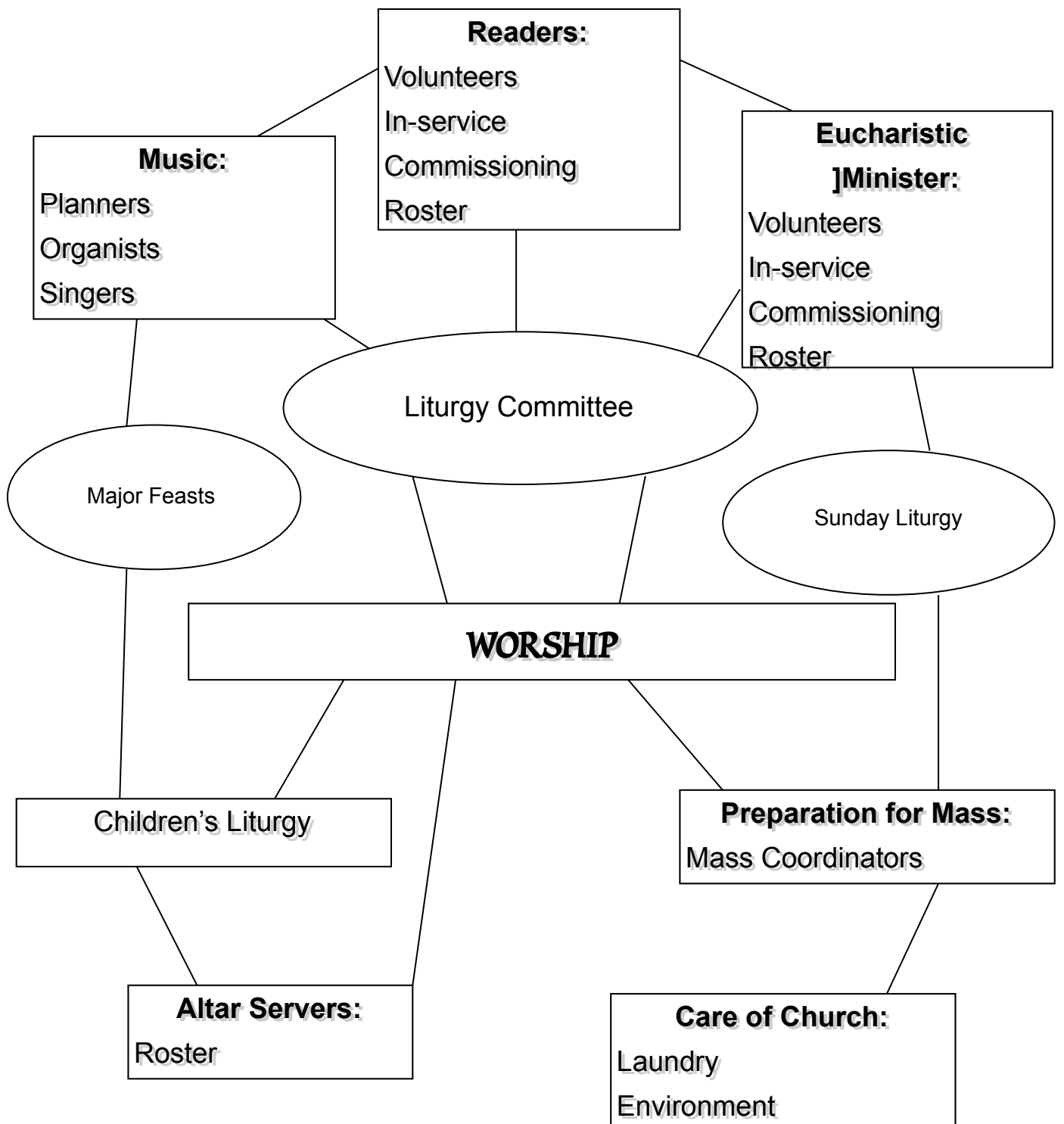
The Sacramental Preparation Team: Teams for the preparation of children and adults for Baptism, Confirmation/Communion and Penance (and funerals) are operating well. The Parish Leader currently co-ordinates these programmes.

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA): At Christmas 2008 we welcomed one new member to our faith community. A dedicated team offers the programme.

Special Religious Development (SPRED): The Parish continues to be active in supporting the Diocesan programme and makes available facilities for monthly meetings. SPRED addresses the religious development of adults who have an intellectual disability.

Adult Faith Education: A weekly one-hour session is led by the Parish Leader. This provides an opportunity to explore our Christian beliefs and understanding and to develop a personal spirituality. It is open to all and approximately twelve parishioners attend regularly. Recently the book "Travels in Sacred Places" by Geoffrey Robinson has provided the focus for discussion.

Bevan Devine.



- WORSHIP -

The aim of the Worship Ministry is to ensure that the parish gathers as a worshipping community and that parishioners are enabled to participate in prayerful liturgical experiences.

The Liturgy Committee oversees the faith community's liturgy and monthly. The members of this committee work together and share moments of on-going formation, planning, evaluation, in an atmosphere of joy and happiness.

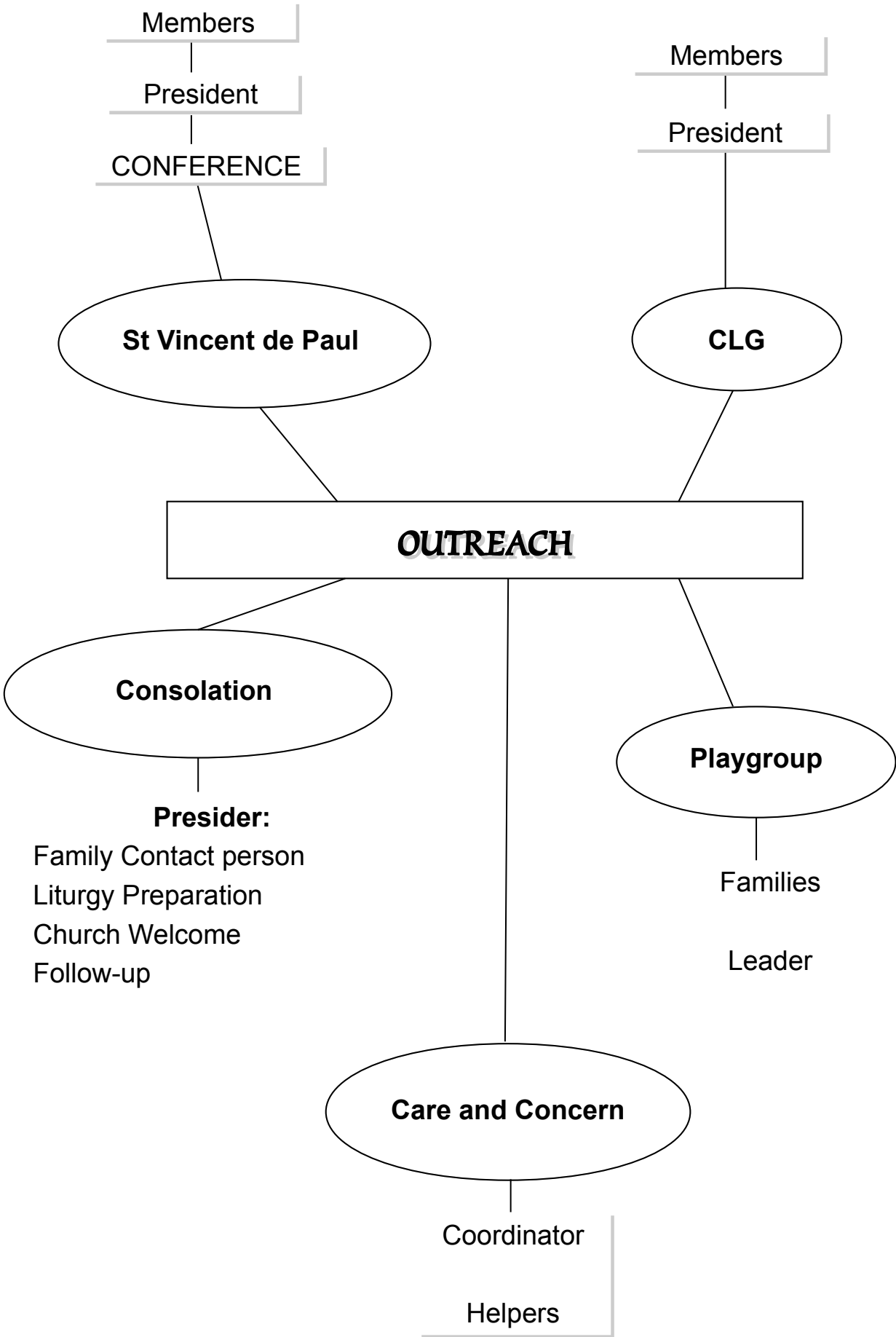
In our planning we have tried to continue to build a praying, vibrant and caring, committed community in the areas of readers, Eucharistic ministers, and mass co-ordinators, alter servers, music and lay-led liturgies, along with special liturgies for Christmas, Easter and major feast day celebrations. Much of the work in the area of worship is visible to others, but there is always the silent work that is done on behalf of the parish. This does not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Our liturgy meetings always include a formation and prayer segment which I believe is vital to our work.

We have managed to introduce a group of male singers who lead our celebration of mass when there is a fifth Sunday in the month. This is proving very popular and complements our Sunday liturgies with a different approach from the norm. Our young people are very involved in our liturgies. Alter servers are well trained and children's liturgies still continue. Training for new readers and new Eucharistic ministers is strongly encouraged. Service for the liturgical ministries is organised on a roster system and ensures that we are well prepared to celebrate Eucharist and proclaim God's word confidently and reverently.

Liturgy of the Word with communion is celebrated each Wednesday (exc. School holidays) and is well attended. It runs on a roster system. I believe that weekend Liturgies of the Word will become more common and, with proper training for its leaders, will continue to gain acceptance from our community.

I am extremely grateful and continue to thank God for our St. Thomas Mores community and its leaders, and am very proud to be a part of it.

Nev Sarquis



- OUTREACH -

My second year on the Parish Council. It has been a privilege to work with such a wonderful group of people.

The Outreach Ministry is to ensure that parishioners are aware of the need of people in our society and that as a parish we respond where possible. As well as the specific groups within the parish which respond to on-going need, other initiatives are undertaken to help us live out this parish commitment.

For some years, as a parish, we have had contact with *Ada's Haven* a refuge for families – women and children – who are suffering domestic violence. *Ada's Haven* started as a refuge for Indigenous women and their children and now takes families from all cultures. One of our parishioners was interested in the 'outreach ministry of our parish. This led to a consideration of how we could extend our connection with and support of our country's indigenous peoples.

After undertaking a 'needs assessment' in conjunction with *Ada's Haven* management, the issue was discussed at a Social Justice meeting and from here a proposal was presented to the Pastoral Council. As a result, the parish is offering to help with establishing an outdoor area for the women and children and to help with training the women in the areas of gardening, cooking and handicraft. As the aim is to be a work of our whole community, members of the parish are being asked to contribute their skills in these areas. There will also be on-going help with provision of school uniforms for the children and toiletries for the women. This is a work in progress and more information will be forthcoming in the near future.

Following is a short summary of established groups in the parish who participate in the Outreach Ministry.

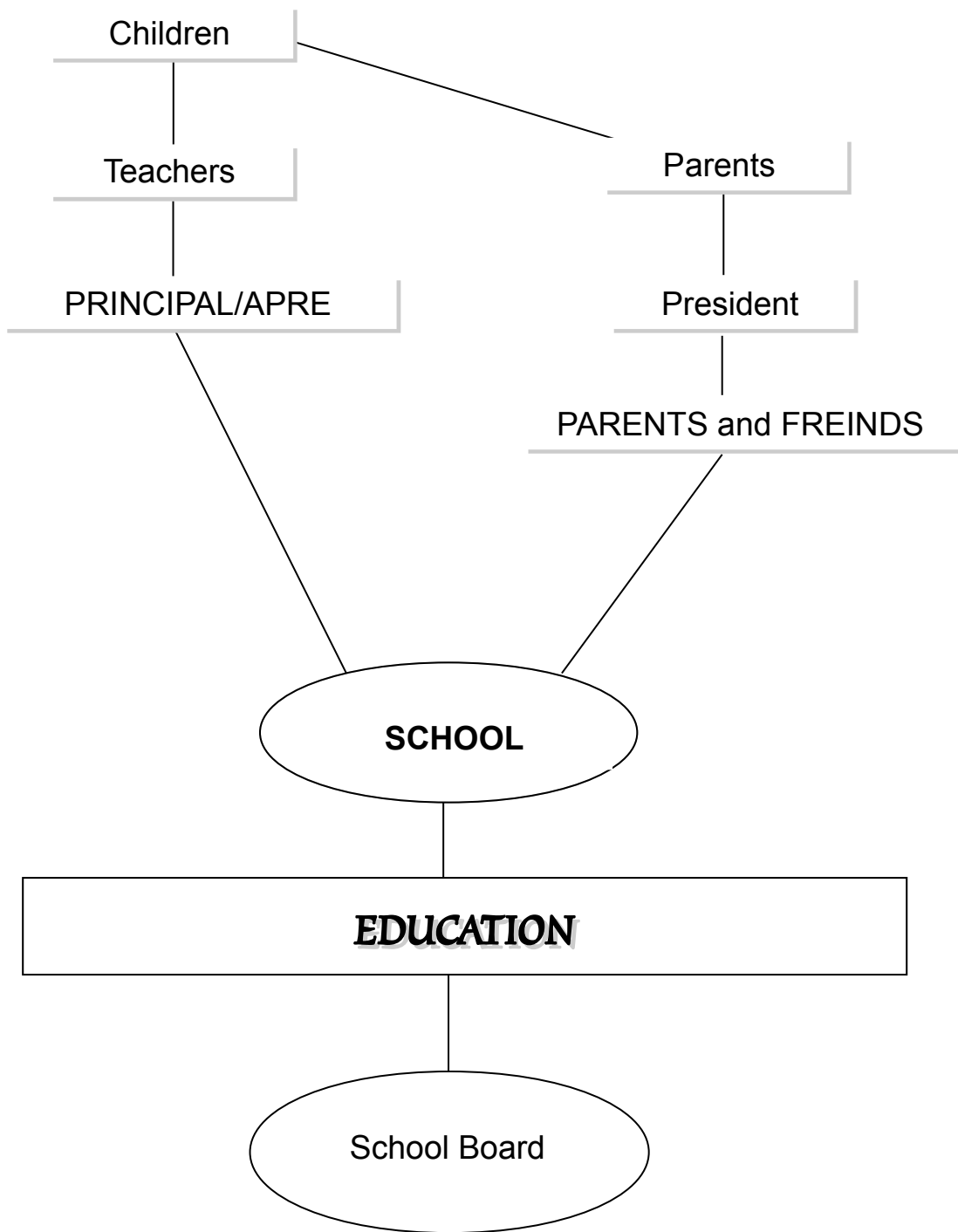
Care and Concern: This is a committed group who with many volunteers exercise their ministry with great love within our community, providing catering, support for parish funerals, and crisis situations when the need arises. They also assist people in using public transport shopping, doctors, sick, also the lonely, aged and bereaved, as well newcomers to the Parish.

St Thomas Mores Play Group: The Play Group, which is affiliated with Play Group Australia meets each week where we provide an environment of welcome and support for parents/care givers and young children. The committee has worked hard and hope that parents are able to avail themselves of the support that this group can offer. .

St Vincent de Paul: The voluntary work for St Vincent de Paul continues in a very strong way. They ensure that the works of the society continue by ensuring that parishioners are part of extending help to people in need. We value the voluntary work of the people involved in the St Vincent de Paul in our parish.

Catholic Ladies Group: This group offers support for its members. They continue to reach out to people in a number of ways. The group gathers for the celebration of mass and follow with their meeting, Adult Faith Formation, based on the Sunday's Gospel and open for discussion. They are a happy group.

Trevor Hohn



- EDUCATION -

Our parish school continues to provide a high quality of education for our future generation. Thirty-two staff have 408 children in their care. This number includes 27 Sudanese who have special needs which are being met by the school staff and community.

The school board meets each month. The board consists of staff and parent representation and it is an honour to be part of such a dedicated group who all have the one mindset to provide the best education and facilities possible for our children.

Under the guidance of our chairperson the board undertook a strategic brainstorming session on our school profile and how we would like to be seen and promoted in the community. The outcome of this will assist us in the years to come.

We have regular formation sessions before we have our finance report, building and maintenance report and school reports. At one meeting, we learnt about the history of St Thomas More's school which was well accepted by the committee. This information helps us all to understand how far the school has come from its humble beginnings. We have had in-service presentations by staff on Risk Management and Child Protection and sessions on Church and spirituality and the history of Catholic Education in Australia.

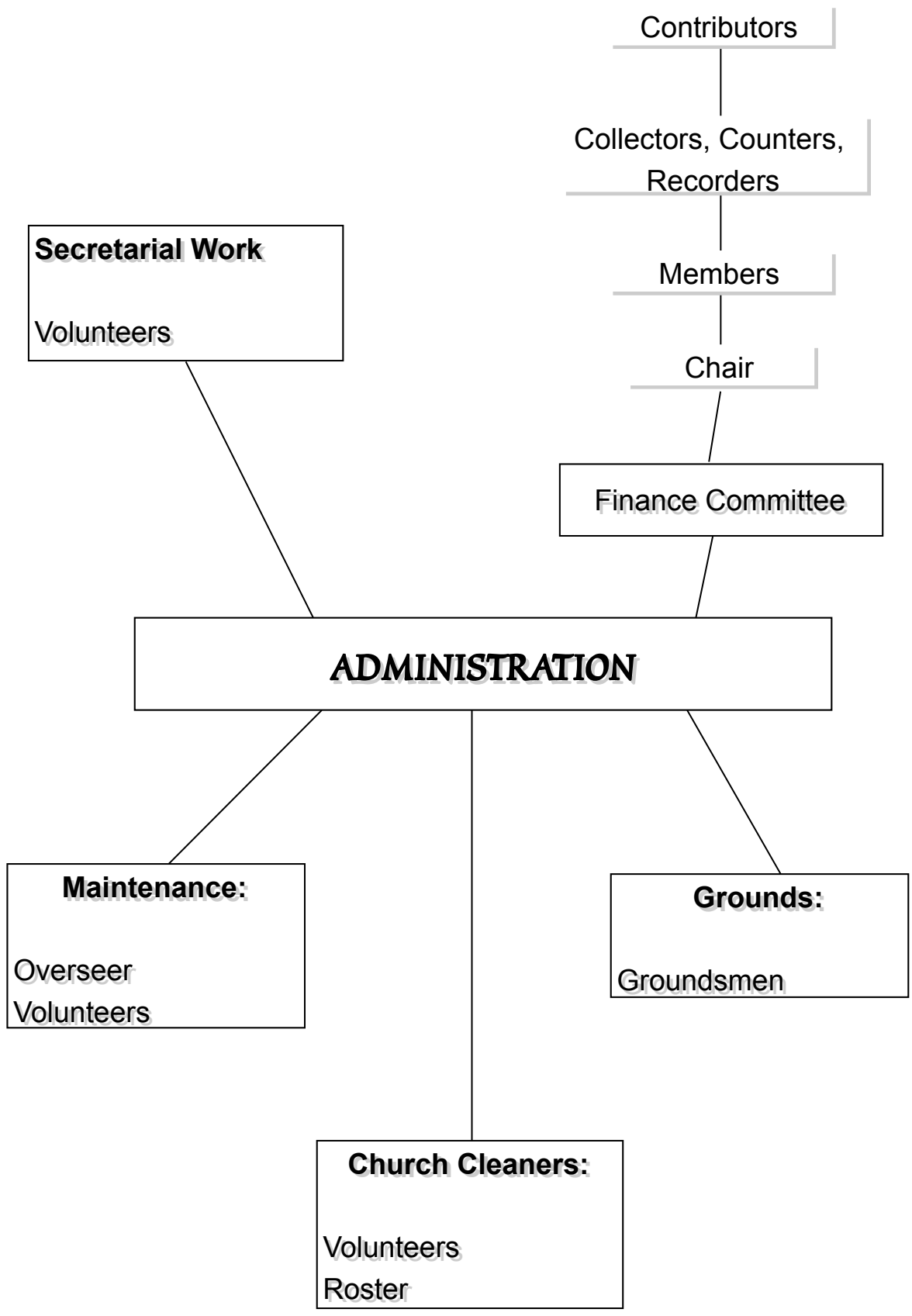
With the recent Federal Government grants for schools the board discussed the various allocation of funds for the refurbishment and building projects of the school. These ideas were taken to the Parish Council who met several times with members of the school community to discuss possible avenues of working with the school on these projects. It is a pleasure to be involved with people who can openly discuss and debate issues. The end result was for parish and school to undertake projects separately, and the decision making was around ensuring that all benefited from what was put in place. The improvements under the current government grants will assist the school in the development of infrastructure that will support the continuing deliverance of a Catholic Christian education of depth and rigour.

During the past 18 months school staff have been working on developing their school Vision. The Vision is: "IMAGINE the journey, SHAPE the pathways, BECOME the future", with the emphasis on IMAGINE, SHAPE and BECOME. This is the foundation for the school's teaching and learning and the curriculum of the school is developed through the values of Joy, Justice, Faith and Hope. These values were chosen from the stories of the Sisters of St Joseph and Thomas More. The Vision will be launched at St Thomas More's Church on Thursday 27th August and St Thomas More's Parishioners are welcome to attend.

Our school has a strong community spirit and continues to provide a good education in the light of current trends for our children. The parents of the school are to be congratulated on their involvement and commitment - the working bees, the tuckshop, the uniform shop, the banking ladies, the classroom helpers - the list is endless. The school looks on parents as partners in the educational journey of their children and appreciates the continual and generous support of the Parish.

It is a pleasure to be part of a caring and dedicated board. The entire parish can be very proud of our School.

Jeff Antonio



Contributors

Collectors, Counters,
Recorders

Members

Chair

Finance Committee

Secretarial Work
Volunteers

ADMINISTRATION

Maintenance:
Overseer
Volunteers

Grounds:
Groundsmen

Church Cleaners:
Volunteers
Roster

- ADMINISTRATION -

As a member of the Parish Pastoral Council for last 2 years , my ministry has involved the area of Administration. This ministry ensures the parish is adequately resourced with staff, buildings are maintained, plant and equipment is cared for and open lines of communication are available between parishioners, parish group members and Pastoral Council.

The Parish Staff are to be commended on their dedication, competence, good understanding of the administration processes and the way they perform their varied and demanding roles.

Policy Formation

The development of policies to build a framework for future functioning of the Parish continues.

Maintenance

The removal of the old pre-school in Ramsay street to make way for additional car parks is now completed. This will free up parking for school parents and general parking for parishioners.

We were successful in obtaining a 50% grant towards the cost of installation of solar panels on the roof of our church. Energy in excess of our needs will be sold back into the grid. In time, our energy bill will be in credit.

The annual working bee was held last December with 35 participants undertaking gardening, trimming and cleaning of the church inside and out. It was also a good social occasion.

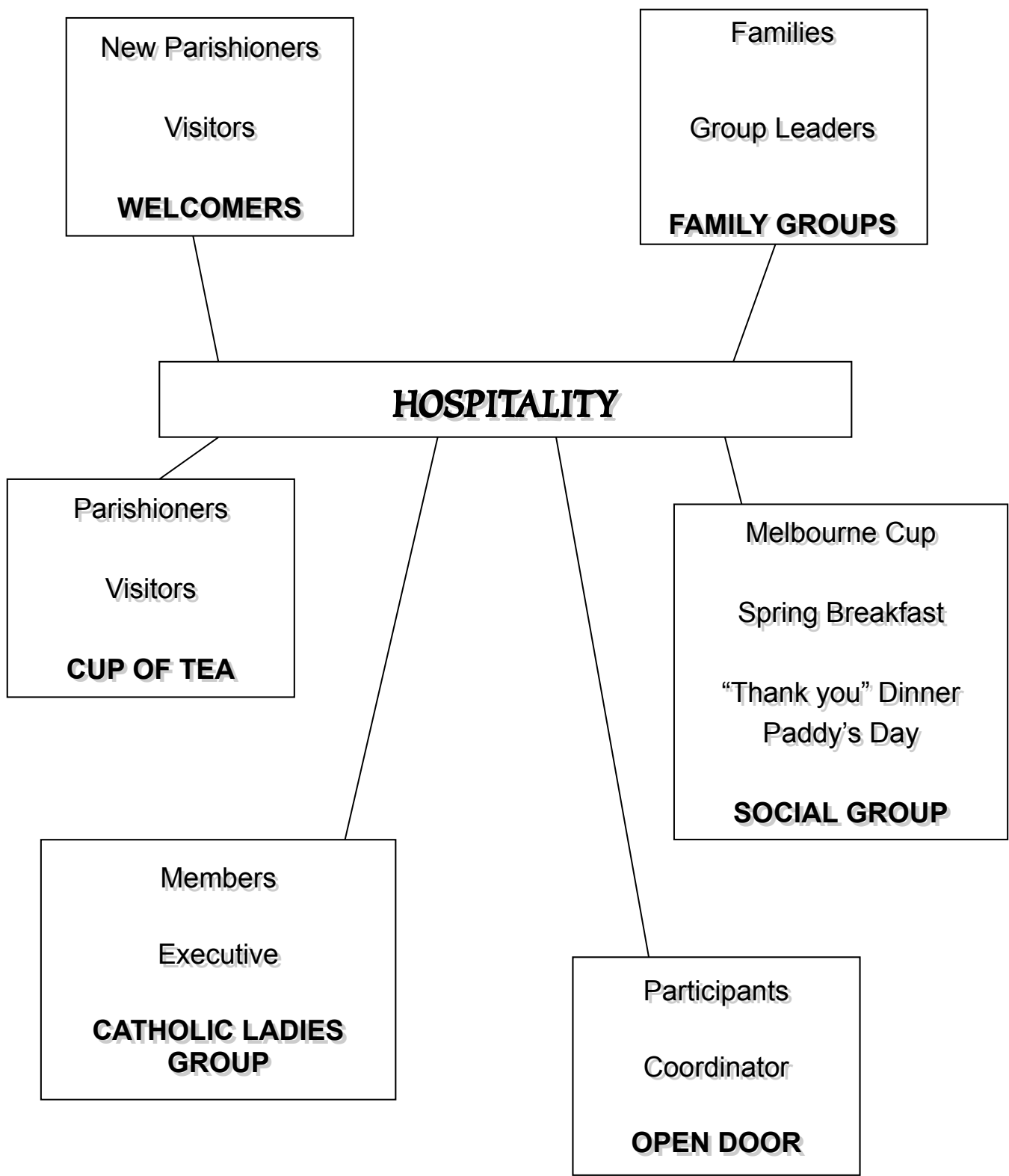
The Parish home in Norah Street continues to be rented until July 2010. This investment forms part of the Parish's long term needs. The home is leased out on commercial bases.

Maintenance on the floor of the parish hall is almost complete. This will ensure that we continue to provide a safe environment for our community.

Finance Committee

The financial aspect of the Parish is very important as this committee ensures that funds are available and managed for the immediate and future needs of our Parish. Liaison between the Pastoral Council and the Finance committee continues to be an important link for the smooth running of the Parish. The budget for the last financial year was adhered to with continued support not only to our needs but the needs of other Parishes who continue with limited financial support.

Terry Sullivan



- HOSPITALITY -

My role as the Pastoral Council's Minister for Hospitality this last year (my first on the Council) has been to ensure the community aspect of the parish is fostered and that the Parish continues to celebrate socially.

Towards the end of 2008 there was a recognised need for the formation of a Social Committee. This committee would provide an ongoing supportive network of parishioners willing to ensure that the various parish based social activities that need to be planned occur during the year. Led by the Pastoral Council Hospitality Minister this group was to oversee the communities social gatherings. The role of this committee now ensures that the community has opportunities for social gatherings. They make sure that a group of parishioners is at hand to organise each of the important social gatherings we have during the year and see that there are hands on deck when a meal, afternoon tea or a cuppa needs to be arranged for a one off parish event. There is scope in 2010 to further clarify the role this committee needs to take in the social life of the parish.

The roster for cups of teas at Sunday mass works well with the occasional hiccup when groups forget when they are rostered. If the discrepancy is discovered soon enough there is often a parishioner or two to step into the breach.

As always Paddy's Night entertainment (organised under the umbrella of the family groups) went very well and a great night out was had by all.

A late starter – The Melbourne Cup Dinner at the end of 2008 was without its usual convenor but members of the social committee and other energetic parishioners took up the cause - the ensuing night was enjoyed by all and went off without a hitch. Live background music and well organised racing games and a hat competition topped off the night of good food, wine and camaraderie.

The Thank You Dinner for parishioners, organised by the Parish Council, again proved a winner providing a stress free evening for the organisers with pizza and desert slices again the flavour of the night. The simplified fair seems to have been a good move to lightening the catering load. There were however comments from older members of the parish that in future they would be more likely to attend if the get together was during the day (e.g. a midday luncheon or barbecue)

The Catholic Ladies Group comes under the umbrella of hospitality. This energetic group of ladies meets on a monthly basis and raises funds with a monthly card party for a variety of charities. The cards are enjoyed by the ladies and this year their fund raising efforts included (among others) donations to Ada's Haven, The World Youth Rally and Amnesty International.

Open Door meets on a weekly basis for morning tea, friendship and craft activities. There is a wealth of creativity and expertise within this group of ladies.

The Family Groups are a dynamic subculture in the parish. They provide social activities, strong support and fun for their members.

Specific Sundays have been set aside specifically to welcome newcomers to the parish at the cup of tea after mass.

Given the warm, caring and energetic nature of the parish there are no arduous tasks that are required from this ministerial position. Support and advice from the parish administration is always generously forthcoming at any time it is needed, and the monthly Parish Council meetings clarify, inform and enlighten.

Cheryl Brown

