

Belonging and Inclusion

This month we are focusing on our vision for belonging and inclusion. Galatians 3:28 tells us "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". This is the message of universal belonging and inclusion that we as Christians must live out. However, what does this look like in practice? What might this vision look like for St. Peter's?

As with our other visions for St. Peter's, there is no clear cut answer, but rather a collection of ideas that we can explore as a parish. We want everyone who walks into St. Peter's to feel that they belong and can be included within our parish. Among our discussions, people have had differing ideas of what this might look like. That makes sense because we all have different ideas of what it means to belong at St. Peter's.

One of the ideas that has been suggested is that we try to incorporate more modern music into the 10am service. This doesn't mean 'throwing out the baby with the bath water', but rather encourages us to consider how particular styles of worship and liturgy may be perceived as a barrier to inclusion. At the confirmation service, we heard the children sing 'Here I am to Worship'. This was easy for the children to sing along to and allowed them to be part of the worship in that service. This simple gesture showed that we wanted our children to feel that they belong. It has also been suggested that prayers of intercession be written by the people who deliver them, adding that personal touch. What other things can we do with our worship and liturgy to become more inclusive?

A central part of this vision is making sure that people are welcomed. We want a smiling face to be the first thing people see when they walk into St. Peter's. We can enhance this welcome by changing our aesthetics too. Ideas such as a prayer tree, different colour schemes and other crafts might give off a more welcoming vibe. To be an inclusive church, we must welcome everyone. We are called to

provide a spiritual space for all. Can we make it more inviting for people to come in? Can we be more welcoming when people do come in?

By now, readers will have an idea of what this vision is about and what it might look like at St. Peter's. We want everyone to take pride and ownership in the idea of St. Peter's being a place of belonging and inclusion. That means that we all need to be part of this discussion. There are no right or wrong answers, just different ideas of how we can go forward. Everyone should feel encouraged to share their ideas in this regard so that we can work towards this shared vision for our parish.

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