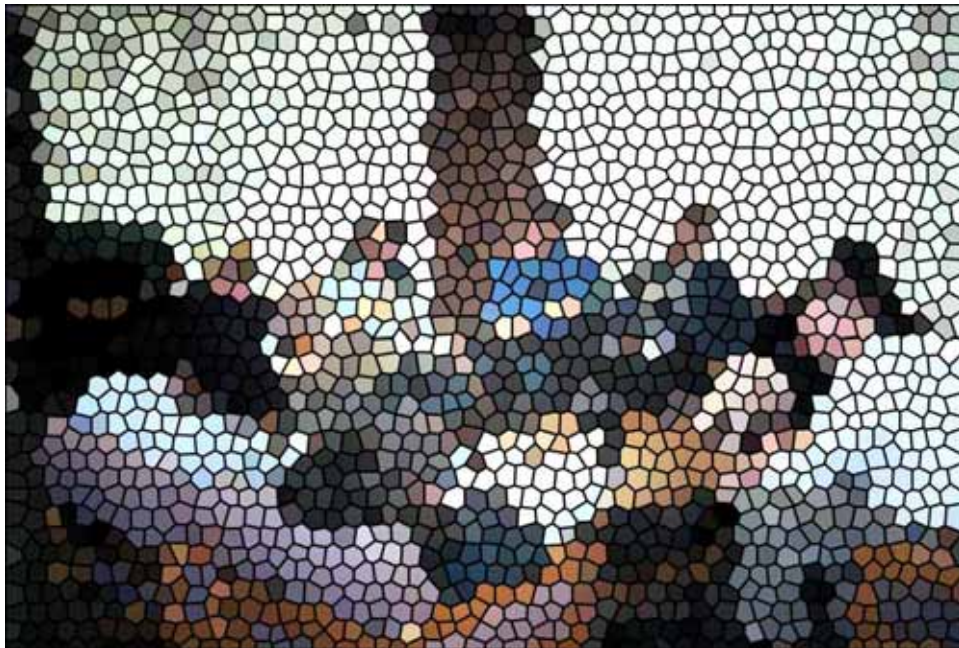




# Brigidine Stewardship Councils

## Handbook



*As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as  
good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Pt. 4:10)*

**Brigidine Secondary Colleges, Victoria and South Australia  
March 2004**

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# The Mission Of Brigidine Education

## Brigidine Secondary Schools

*Marian College, Ararat;*  
*St. Joseph's College, Echuca;*  
*Clonard College, Geelong;*  
*Kildare College, Holden Hill;*  
*Kilbreda College, Mentone;*  
*Killester College, Springvale;*  
*Marian College, Sunshine West.*



**St Joseph's College Echuca – Founded 1886**

As a group of schools sharing a particular tradition Brigidine schools have as their overriding goal the provision of education that is Catholic for those who wish to “come and see” what it means to be part of a Christian community. In the tradition of the Brigidine Sisters, and inspired by the stories of St. Brigid and the ministry of Daniel Delany, Brigidine schools offer a secondary education to those in the local community. Each of the schools aims to offer an education that is person centred and focussed on teaching students to think critically, communicate effectively, respond compassionately to the needs of others and assume roles of Christian leadership. Each hopes to empower young people to acknowledge their own giftedness and to make decisions informed by a well-developed moral conscience. Brigidine schools try to foster an appreciation of the diversity of the global community and a quest for knowledge and learning as life long goals.

From these core values emerge a series of **foundational beliefs**

*We believe authentic Catholic education is a valid expression of the teaching mission of the Church today*

*We believe in the right of every person to a good education, regardless of race, creed, sex or socio-economic status*

*We believe in providing quality educational services and programs that contribute to the well-being of all students*

*We believe in our responsibility as educators to speak and respond to issues of justice*

*We believe that excellence and competence should be pursued by all who teach and support the education in our schools*

*We believe in the gospel value of stewardship which is the source of our commitment to maximise the use of resources for the common good of all within the school community*

### BRIGIDINE SPONSORED EDUCATION CORE VALUES

Brigidine Schools commit themselves to a series of gospel inspired values that become the basis for all policies and practices

**In Brigidine Education we will:**

**Be faithful**

*to our Catholic heritage*

**Welcome**

*all people, especially the most vulnerable*

**Celebrate**

*all that is good with joy and gratitude*

**Engender**

*a love of learning, hope and a sense of purpose*

**Image and practise**

*justice and service*

# Brigidine Involvement In Education An Evolving Story

## The Tradition Begins

The Brigidine Congregation was founded in Tullow, Co. Carlow, Ireland in 1807, by the Diocesan Bishop, Daniel Delany as a response to the challenge of widespread poverty and illiteracy that plagued Ireland in those penal times. This initiative was made possible by an easing of persecution under penal laws that were finally abolished in 1829. Bishop Delany's founding of the congregation was inspired by the works of the early Irish saint Brigid whose monasteries served the poor and needy in the fifth century. In this sense, the founding of the Brigidine congregation was a re-founding of an early monastic movement, with Delany inviting the women who established the order to direct their lives and work towards those in most need at the end of the penal years. Responding to need and opportunity was to become a recurring theme in the history of the Brigidines.



### Brigidine Convent Tullow

Commencing with six Sisters, Eleanor Tallon, Eleanor Dawson, Catherine Doyle, Brigid Brien, Judith Whelan and Margaret Kinsella, the Congregation expanded considerably over the ensuing years. By the 1880's, the Brigidines had become a highly educated group of women committed to providing an education that was Catholic in a number of centres throughout the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin

It was around this time that the Bishop of Sandhurst, Martin Crane, was successful in his request for a community of Brigidines to emigrate to Echuca, a town with few resources but with urgent educational needs. Hence the Brigidine

story in Victoria began in 1886. A similar beginning had occurred in New South Wales at Coonamble in 1883.

Over the next fifteen years four other foundations (Beechworth, Wangaratta, Ararat and Rochester) were established in rural Victoria and 1904 saw the beginning of expansion in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The mass migration to Australia, following World War II accelerated the growth of schools, particularly in Melbourne, with the most recent establishment of a school occurring at Holden Hill, Adelaide in 1966. From the 1970's to the present day, the Brigidines have been increasingly working in partnership with lay staffs in the provision of Catholic Education, both in Brigidine and in Parish Primary schools.

During the decades of the 1980s and 1990s partnership with the laity has developed to the point where most Brigidine Secondary Colleges are administered by lay Principals or Co Principals. This period of transition has resulted in the role of the Brigidine Sisters evolving from one of active management of individual schools to that of sponsorship of a network of schools sharing common values and beliefs.

The challenge over all of these years and periods of transition has been to be faithful to the vision of Daniel Delany who saw education as the pathway to fullness of life, a pathway which ought to be available to all, particularly the most vulnerable.



Marian College Ararat – Founded 1889

# Brigidine Sponsorship Of Secondary Schools

Sponsorship is the relationship of the Brigidine Sisters with the work of education carried on in the name of Brigidine.

Sponsorship involves the ongoing development of ministry within Catholic secondary schools owned by the Brigidine Sisters in ways that are consistent with the mission, philosophy and professed values of the Congregation.

The work of sponsorship is enacted through encouragement, support and working in partnership with all those who have responded to the invitation to share the ministry of catholic education with the Brigidine Sisters. All who are partners in this undertaking will share in the spiritual and structural dimensions of maintaining and developing the schools and other places where the work of Brigidine education is being carried on.

## The Brigidine Sponsorship Group

The Brigidine Sponsorship Group, with a current membership of three Brigidine Sisters, exercises the rights and responsibilities of the Brigidine Sisters within the congregation's schools. The Sponsorship Group can speak and act for any or all of the Brigidine schools. The members will do this on occasions after consulting with the schools which will be affected. An important aspect of their task is to ensure ongoing Sponsorship for the future when fewer Brigidine Sisters will be engaged in active ministry.



Kilbreda College Mentone – Founded 1904

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES RETAINED BY THE BRIGIDINE SISTERS

The rights and responsibilities retained by the Brigidine Sisters (and exercised through the Sponsorship Group) are as follows:

1. ensuring the **mission and philosophy** of each of the schools remains faithful to the Mission Statement and the Brigidine Core Values
2. adopting and amending the **Constitutions** and, in the event of incorporation, the Articles of Association
3. approving any **fundamental change** in the nature of the school
4. **liaising** with education authorities, Catholic and government, on major matters
5. appointing school **auditors** and approving an instructional brief to auditors
6. ensuring a viable **budget** and approving it through the delegation of this authority to each Stewardship Council.
7. signing any government or Catholic education **authority documents** that ask for the canonical authority or the owner's signature e.g. the Annual Financial Statement, census documents
8. approving any school **borrowing** of 5% or more of the school's annual turnover
9. approving a **deficit budget** which is 2% or more of the school's annual turnover
10. approving the encumbrance, purchase, sale or lease of any Brigidine **property**
11. appointing the school **Principal or Co-Principals**
12. ensuring regular **appraisal** of the Principal or Co-Principals
13. appointing **Stewardship Council members**
14. removing a **Stewardship Council member** on the recommendation of, or after consultation with the Stewardship Council and the Principal or Co-Principals
15. approving any **review** of the operations of the Stewardship Council

# The Concept That Informs "Stewardship" Councils

**The extracts on this page were central to the development of an understanding of stewardship and how this concept relates to the formation of Brigidine school councils at the time of their development in 1995**

*New conditions in our educational situations  
Call for deep discernment.*

*We must learn to live in a new land.*

*What we have always known  
Is no longer enough  
To answer the questions that arise in us.*

*We find ourselves facing a new history,  
And therefore facing a new word from God ...*

*We are not to cling  
To the truth we have always known,  
But seek in truth  
The will of God active in these times.*

*It calls for fidelity to God  
As we make our way  
Through the unknown in history.*

*It requires of us a readiness  
To 'leave our father's house',  
As Abraham was called to do.*

*As it demands that  
We 'walk humbly with our God'  
As the prophet Micah enjoins us.*

**J. Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation***

Stewardship is to hold something in trust for another. Historically, stewardship was a means to protect a kingdom while those rightfully in charge were away, or, more often to govern for the sake of an underage king. The underage king, for us, is the next generation ...

Stewardship is the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organisation but operating in service, rather than in control of those around us. Service is the underlying value ...

Stewardship springs from a set of beliefs about reforming organisations that affirms our choice for service over the pursuit of self-interest. When we choose service over self-interest, we say we are willing to be deeply accountable without choosing to control the world around us ...

Stewardship taken seriously is not just an economic strategy. It is also an answer to the spirit calling out. Spirituality is the process of living out a set of deeply held personal values, of honouring forces or a presence greater than ourselves. It expresses our desire to find meaning in, and to treat as an offering what we do. To embrace stewardship is to discover that all is possible through our work ...

Stewardship involves being committed to something outside ourselves. To be part of creating something we care about so we can endure the sacrifice, risk and adventure that commitment entails. This the deeper meaning of service ...

It is not so much the actual work that will draw us out of ourselves. It is the culture and texture and ways of creating community that attract our attention.

***[From Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest P. Block]***

# Stewardship – A Governance and Leadership Model For Brigidine Schools

*There is a parable near the end of Matthew's gospel (Mt. 25: 14-30) which tells the story of "a man who was going on a journey" and who left his wealth in silver pieces to be tended by his three servants. Two of the servants responded wisely, invested the money and made a good profit. The third behaved foolishly, being so anxious about security that he merely kept the original amount safe. On the master's return, he commended the first two and rebuked and punished the third one. The pieces of silver in the story can be seen as symbols of the things that are held dear in an educational community: commitment, care, talents, ministry, and achievements resulting from insight or skill. They are ours in trust to cherish and develop.*

In 1995 a decision was made that a stewardship model be adopted as the approach that would be used in the governance of Brigidine schools. The philosophical and theological bases for this model are explained as follows:

All those associated with the governance of the school are called to stewardship. The concept of Stewardship is very rich in biblical and theological contexts. In St. Peter's letter to the early church, we read:

*As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied graces (1 Pet. 4:10)*

Stewardship is not the whole of the Christian life but it sums up a particularly important element of that life. It affects the way we live out our lives in many and varied ways. Part of stewardship involves safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly. It is giving generously of our time, talents and treasures; it is also receiving God's gifts gratefully, cultivating them responsibly and sharing them lovingly in justice with others; it is always being ready to return them with increase to God. It is about loyalty to an agreed set of core values.

We are stewards of God's gifts and these include different things: spiritual gifts like faith, hope and love; personal and community talents; rich relationships with family and friends; the achievements of human genius and skill. As well,

we are custodians of the traditions of the Christian people over the centuries, the beautiful land and the rest of creation we enjoy; the education facilities and resources including well developed school grounds and places of learning; the spiritual gifts that have come to us from the lives of many faithful and holy people in the past; the stories and the riches left to us by those who have established and toiled in Brigidine schools over the past century.

Stewardship begins with discipleship and with our own unique vocation. However, although Jesus called each disciple separately, he invited them to form a community and to function as a group of people for the spreading of the message of God and for the common good. We are called to evangelise and to share the good news with others; we are called to look outwards and to place ourselves at the service of the entire human community, especially those who are in most need.

The Eucharist is a powerful focus point for our commitment to stewardship. *'Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread'*. (1 Cor. 10:17)

The Eucharist calls us to give thanks for all the gifts we have received, to recommit ourselves to full participation in co-creation and redemption and to active stewardship of all the material and spiritual gifts entrusted to us. The story of the sharing of the loaves and fishes can be interpreted as the generous response of the community present after being challenged to share the food that otherwise they would have kept for themselves – mirroring the stewardship of Jesus who gave all.

The Stewardship Council may be seen as the *faithful and prudent steward* to whom the householder assigns responsibility for the other members of the household to *distribute the food allowance at the proper time* (Lk. 12:42). For the Stewardship Council, this will involve working from a strong sense of vocation. It may mean reminding the school community about the responsibilities they have as a Christian community; it may mean taking some active steps in the face of pressures to conform to measures of consumerism and individualism.

There are tensions in making decisions in education from a Christian perspective of stewardship in that some of the very things we strive to give students

such as insightful learning, science, art, technology, and opportunities to widen their horizons can be seen as luxuries and inimical to a simple life style. The Stewardship Council will have to struggle with these dilemmas as will staff, students and parents.

Emerging from this Christian view, responsible stewardship

- makes decisions within the context of an agreed sense of Christian mission and gospel values
- promotes a good education for all students and responds to issues of justice and social needs

- assesses the cost of services offered, the distribution of resources and the inclusiveness of the more vulnerable in our society
- processes and monitors short and long range financial plans
- reports regularly on the way the school is using the resources available to educate in a way that is truly Catholic
- assures any necessary legal responsibilities are taken care of.

[From Model of a Stewardship Council for Brigidine Schools June 1995]

## THE MANDATE OF THE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

The major focus of the Stewardship Council is maintaining and developing the school as a good place for the education of young people within the traditions of the Catholic Church and the Brigidine Congregation.

The major tasks of the Stewardship Council are:

- To monitor the policies of the school, to be part of the consultative process of policy making and to offer constructive advice so that all policies strengthen the school as a good place for young people.
- To plan for the future by studying trends in education, local demography and emerging needs.
- To monitor the recurrent and capital finances of the school.
- To contribute to the public relations of the school within the wider community.



In Ireland, Brigid's Wells are significant places, symbols of the life giving power of water.

Stewardship Councils are also viewed as 'life giving' for the communities they serve

# Operating Principles And Arrangements Of The Stewardship Council

## Decision Making

Central to this Christian view of stewardship and a view of Church as the people of God is the idea of sharing the God given wisdom that is contained within the stewarding group.

***Stewardship (and 'stewarding an education that is Catholic') is a way of talking about our willingness to follow Jesus, to be drawn by his example, to have our loyalties shaped and corrected by him.***

As such, decision making should emerge from collaboration of the members which involves education, discussion, discernment and prayer. Such a model is distinctive from democratic or representative models that can be overly selective, controlling and competitive.

Decision making in this model of Stewardship Councils is based on each person trying to see all sides of an issue, relying on the

expertise and insights of others and being mindful of one's decisions on others. This assumes that decision making is not trying to represent a particular group's point of view but rather looking to the common good.

## Leadership

The stewardship model also implies a model of leadership within all levels of the school that is *servant focussed* in the sense of being directed towards assisting others in their respective roles and in achieving goals that are directed towards the common good. Such a view of leadership places no value in the quest for personal gain or advancing the interests of one party or section of the school over another. Parallel to this model of leadership is the desire for leadership to be *transformational* in the sense of valuing critical reflection and moving the organisation closer and closer to policies and practices that truly reflect the core values of Brigidine education.

As an entity, the Council has a leadership role. Each person carries out this leadership function, and, as such, should strive to maintain the confidentiality of the Council and to make comments in public which are positive, constructive and helpful to the Council's mission.

Each individual member has the duty to support the Council's final decisions, regardless of her or his personal opinion, mindful of the fact that they are seeking to find the common good, not represent a particular group within the school.

## Membership

The major focus of the Stewardship Council is the mission of the school within the context of both Church and Brigidine tradition. This differs from the governance model of a public school which is designed to represent its constituencies. Representative models reflect the plurality of values held by the community served; they may also be based on a desire to mirror a democratic government which is responsible for other systems of education. However, the Stewardship Council is designed to be the custodian of clearly articulated values and to support a school within the educational mission of the Church. It therefore does not seem appropriate to base the structure on the representation of separate sectors within the school community.

***Being part of an education that is Catholic means that we are sent out with our mix of talents, opportunities, challenges, weaknesses and potential for service to steward into and for the future.***

In acting as a synthesiser and custodian of the values of the school the Stewardship Council relies heavily on the expertise and wisdom of the school community, especially the staff. It is expected that staff will both inform and provide the practical back-up necessary for the successful operation of the Council. One of the major ways they will do this is by membership of committees (refer to page 13) and by the provision of data, other information and draft policies for the Stewardship Council members. At times the Stewardship Council may request the presence of certain staff members at part or all of a meeting so that the Council members are fully briefed about an issue.

The committees themselves will need to be serviced with information and general expertise that can only come from the staff.

The committee structure will also be one of the main ways of parent involvement in the school and, as such, needs to be supported by the staff.

## Appointment Of Stewardship Council members

Members of the Stewardship Council are appointed by the Sponsorship Group. Each Stewardship Council will have a Nominating Committee which will be responsible for putting names forward for consideration by the Sponsorship Group. As well, the Sponsorship Group has the right to appoint others after consultation with the Stewardship Council Chairperson and the school Principal.

Members will be chosen on the basis of having:

- a sense of “mission” and a desire that the ministry of education be alive in the church
- a sense of affiliation and appreciation for the school and what it is doing
- an ability to be involved in shared decision making on behalf of the common good

They will also be chosen because they have one or more of the following:

- particular expertise which they are willing to share with the Stewardship Council
- broad expertise and knowledge e.g. an understanding of the local community or an appreciation of the history and potential of the school
- some experience of the school as a past teacher, student or parent

Staff members are ineligible for Council membership since there could be points of conflict of interest where the Council has some delegated “employer” roles. However, staff members have a vital role to play on sub committees of each Stewardship Council. (Refer to page 13)

## Role Of The Principal/Co Principals

The Principal or Co Principals of the school will be the Executive Officer of the Stewardship Council and, as such, shall attend all meetings of the Council. Principals are key people in determining the successful operation of Councils and are a point of liaison between the Sponsorship Group, the Council, its sub-committees and the school community.

## Selection of Members

In the selection of members it is recommended that the people from the following groups be considered:

- past parents, teachers and students for a knowledge and understanding of the school
- people from the wider community who have an interest in education and can bring understandings of the issues in the general community to bear on discussions
- parents of present students (it is recommended that no more than three from this group in order to ensure objectivity in discussions)

Where possible two Brigidine Sisters or Brigidine Secondary Schools Council members will be Stewardship Council members to ensure a continuity with the Brigidine tradition

## Number Of Members Of The Stewardship Council

The Council will normally have ten members. The Principal as Executive Officer will attend all meetings and, after consultation with the Council Chairperson, will decide if another person from the Leadership Team of the school will attend (in the capacity of sharing the Executive Officer role).

### What is expected of each Stewardship Council member?

*It is expected that each member will*

- *Promote the Brigidine Core Values*
- *Support the Principal and the staff in the provision of a Catholic education*
- *Give the necessary time, thought and study in order to give effective service.*

## Process For The Selection Of Stewardship Council Members

After names have been submitted by the Nominating Committee of the Stewardship Council, the Coordinator of the Brigidine Secondary Schools’ Council will normally meet with the prospective member to discuss the work of the Stewardship Council and the way it works, in particular the contribution asked for from members. This will be used to clarify if the person

wishes to continue and also appears to be a suitable member of the Stewardship Council.

## Term of office on the Stewardship Council

Members will be asked to commit for three years and a further term may be negotiated with the Sponsorship Group for a time up to four more years.



**Killester College Springvale – Founded 1955**

## Roles

The Stewardship Council **Chairperson** is appointed by the Brigidine Sponsorship Group. The appointment is for three years and a further term may be negotiated with the Sponsorship Group for a time up to four more years.

The chairperson's main duty is to be the centre of coordination and unity. He/she does this by facilitating and regulating discussion, deliberately and steadily moving members towards consensus and decision. The agenda for the Stewardship Council meetings is prepared by the Chairperson in consultation with the Principal or Co Principal. All written communication to and from the Stewardship Council is effected through the Chairperson.

The **Deputy Chairperson** is also appointed by the Brigidine Sponsorship Group. In order to ensure continuity, it is suggested that the Deputy Chairperson become the next Chairperson. The role of the Deputy Chairperson is to take over the role of the Chairperson if for any reason the Chairperson is absent.

The **Secretary** is appointed by the Principal on behalf of the Brigidine Sponsorship Group. If this role is filled by someone who is not a Stewardship Council member, the Secretary will be invited to be part of the reflection and prayer of the meeting

but will not take any active part in the rest of the meeting. Minutes of all Stewardship Council meetings are taken by the Secretary who will also forward minutes, agendas with relevant information and preparatory information to members.

It is the essential role of the **Principal** or **Co Principals** to provide educational leadership to the whole school community, not only staff and students, but also to parents and to the Stewardship Council members. The Principal has a dual role on the Stewardship Council – a leader in terms of policy development, an executive in terms of policy implementation. The Principal services the Stewardship Council with reports, recommendations and information, while serving the Stewardship Council by administering the school.

## The responsibilities of the Stewardship Council

A significant part of the Stewardship Council time and energy will be spent in education, reflection and prayer, determining the ways education can be organised as a legitimate ministry within the church. This will form the foundation of working as a Stewardship Council.

The Stewardship Council's main responsibility is **long-term planning and policy making**. It is a policy making team who have an awareness of shared ministry and who together approve policies that are consistent with ideals that come from a belief in the redemptive love of God and faith in the person and messages of Jesus Christ. The Council:

- takes the Brigidine Core Values as basic values underpinning the education offered
- is a structure for shared decision making.
- collects data, looks at trends in education, in local demography, projects future needs and plans how these can be met and consistently updates long range plans.
- provides pre-service and in-service education for Stewardship council members.

Specific aspects of school life that will require constant attention by the Stewardship Council are:

- the mission of the school as a place where the redemptive love of God is witnessed and an education that is catholic offered.
- the policies that are in place, their articulation and implementation, ongoing review of policy.
- long term planning

- the finances of the school, capital and recurrent
- public relations
- support for the Principal

## Ongoing Stewardship Council Development

The most important aspect of Stewardship Council formation is attitudinal learning. An ongoing need exists to model a commitment to life-long learning in the belief that revelation is on-going and best understood within an historical consciousness. A role of the Brigidine Secondary Schools Council is to work with the Principals to ensure on-going formation of the Stewardship Councils. A seminar for members of all Brigidine Stewardship Councils will be held each year. Each meeting of the Stewardship Council will begin with a time of reflection and prayer. Sometimes a workshop may be held to teach certain skills eg. Strategic planning, policy formation.

## Stewardship Committees

***Participation of staff, parents, students and members of the broader community in Stewardship Council Sub-Committees is a key strategy in educating empowering and expanding the base of leadership within the school.***

Much of the work of the Stewardship Council is done via Committees. These are expected to work out of the same set of basic understandings and values as the Stewardship Council. Committees will usually be on-going but ad hoc committees can be established to pursue an issue or prepare for an event.

Each Stewardship Council member is asked to be a member of one Committee. The Principal or the Principal's nominee (usually a person from the Leadership Team) will be a member of each Committee. The Committees are then made up of at least one Stewardship Council member and other school or community members, including parents, teachers and, if appropriate, students. The Committees will have a Chairperson and these can be anyone who is on the Committee.

The Stewardship Council needs to ensure that good communication patterns exist between it and the Committees and that responses to reports are given as soon as possible.

The Stewardship Council will have a Finance Committee and a Nominating Committee. Beyond this, the Committees established will reflect the needs of the school. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive, but reflects possible committees that could be established.

- Community Links or Public Relations
- Policy Development
- Buildings and Maintenance
- Educational Programs
- Long Range Planning
- Student Welfare
- Financial Aid
- Student Enrolments
- Ad hoc as required

## Number of Stewardship Council (and Committee) Meetings.

It is recommended that Stewardship Council meetings and Stewardship Committee meetings alternate. When this structure is in place, ten meetings a year ensures continuity and a reasonable involvement of members in the life of the school. Where it is possible, Stewardship Committees will meet on the one night.



**Clonard College Geelong – Founded 1956**

# Stewarding Material and Financial Resources

The resources that exist in Brigidine schools are the product of over 100 years of planning and development that has seen the establishment of schools in both country and urban areas. This process has been characterised by careful management of scarce resources, hard work and personal sacrifices. The resources available to each school community are both the product of significant struggle on the part of previous generations and a legacy for the future to be held in trust and stewarded appropriately.

As canonical administrators and owners of a network of seven schools, and as the designated authority for the expenditure of government grants, the Brigidine Congregation is extremely mindful of the responsibilities associated with the management of financial resources and the need to furnish accountability statements to system authorities and governments.

As humans on this planet we hold material wealth and goods in trust. We therefore believe we ought to steward those entrusted to us to achieve justice and dignity for all in the community. In Brigidine schools, the focus of endeavour is the students and their changing needs. Decisions about stewardship need to reflect the person-centred nature of the education offered.

In the principles of action which follow, Brigidine leaders commit themselves to a mode of stewardship which supports the mission of the school, with particular emphasis on being an inclusive community, hospitality, careful management of resources, creating learning possibilities for all young people in our care, providing opportunities for adult learning that are growth enhancing, and promoting the design and beauty of the buildings and grounds.



**Marian College Sunshine West – Founded 1957**

## PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

**That the resources of the school are preserved as faithfully as possible**

**That appropriate and mandated measures are taken to ensure accountability**

**That we foster a sense of responsibility for, and pride in the school**

**That we take positive steps to care for and create a beautiful environment**

**That the school's resources are managed with due regard to justice**

- we recognise the reality of family income when making financial decisions
- we maintain a low income fee structure in order to provide access to Catholic education for as many of those seeking it as possible
- we allocate resources to help those who have less access to material wealth
- we use some resources in support of efforts to achieve a just and equitable society

**That we make on-going provision for the future and we do not incur large debts**

**That we ensure a cyclical maintenance plan is developed and followed**

**That we make provision for constant upgrading of teaching and learning materials and equipment**

**That support for professional development of all associated with the school be provided**

# Future Governance Arrangements

The introduction of Stewardship Councils for Brigidine schools in 1996 was in itself one step in the evolutionary development of governance arrangements. At one level, their introduction can be viewed as a response to diminishing numbers of vowed religious who are being replaced by members of the laity committed and skilled in the business of leading schools. Such a view is based essentially in the emerging reality that religious congregations will cease to exist *in the form they have occupied until recent times*.

At another level, this reality is being explored in a more optimistic manner based in the willingness of many congregations to explore what it means to be 'religious' at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In particular, this more hopeful view recognises that all baptised people are called to bear witness to the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ and that the essence of being 'religious' is a calling directed at both vowed religious and lay people. In this sense, the labels that categorise people as 'religious' or 'lay' need to be discarded as we explore the essence of what it means to be Christian in a post modern world including the challenging task of how this is relevant to the process of education.

Such explorations have commenced within the Brigidine Congregation, albeit in embryonic ways, through initiatives such as the establishment of *communities for mission*. Such communities involve religious and lay people working in partnership in the areas of justice, Brigid's Well, (a facility for adult learning and personal development), cosmology (the linking of science and religious belief), and history and archives. Possible future developments include working with *associates or partners* attracted to the particular qualities of the congregation who wish to work in partnership but who also wish to retain their autonomy as individuals.

Similarly, there are professionals who, having worked within the Brigidine tradition, have internalised the values of the congregation. Through their acceptance of leadership positions they have indicated a preparedness to take an ongoing responsibility for perpetuating a style of education in the Brigidine tradition. The operations of the *Brigidine Secondary Schools Council* in which religious and lay people work in collaboration to maintain and plan future

developments in Brigidine education is evidence of this development.

In recognition that the culture of the modern world is transitory and that vocational change occurs for many people at different stages of their life journey, the concept of membership could also be expanded to include people prepared to make a commitment not for life but for a limited number of years.

Each of the above possibilities reflects a re-conceptualisation of membership that goes beyond the understanding that has existed since the foundation of the congregation and which recognises the invitation to all of the faithful to unravel the prophetic call of the gospels.

Central to the issue of future governance arrangements is answering the question "*does the network of Brigidine schools offer an education which is distinctive and worthy of preservation*"? Answering "yes" to this question presupposes an ability to clearly articulate that which is distinctive about Brigidine schools as a particular style of Catholic education, and a willingness to continue exploration of this important issue.

Given that this central question is answered in the affirmative, a range of issues will need to be addressed. These include:

- To what extent will future governance be more closely aligned to diocesan catholic education offices or, as is the current situation, operate relatively autonomously as an authentic church authority under the provisions of canon law?
- What can be undertaken now to ensure that the particular qualities of Brigidine education will continue for future generations?
- What organisational structures will perpetuate the network of Brigidine schools?
- How will such structures be financed and supported?

Whilst these questions will require considerable wisdom and courage to address, the first decade of experience of Stewardship Councils has demonstrated that there are many people of good will, loyal to the Brigidine core values, who are willing to invest time and talent to ensure that future generations will have access to a catholic education in the Brigidine tradition.



**Kildare, Holden Hill, Adelaide – Founded 1966**

## An Explanation of Brigidine Symbols



**St Brigid's Cross** woven from rushes, is said to have been used by Brigid in explaining the crucifixion and redemption story to a dying chieftain. Dating from pre-Christian times, the cross provides a connecting link between pagan customs and the emergence of Christianity. St Brigid crosses are frequently placed over a door to protect people from illness or other misfortune.



The **Lamp Of Learning** symbolises the importance of fire as a source of energy and light, and has become associated with the acquisition of knowledge. 'Brigid's Fire', a perpetual flame, burned in Kildare in pre-Christian times possibly up to the sixteenth century.



The **oak tree** is of particular significance because Kildare takes its name from Cill Dara, the church of the oak, where St Brigid established her monastery. Many Brigidine schools have oak trees grown from acorns taken from the oak tree in Tullow, founding place of the Brigidine Sisters.



The **Badge of the Congregation of St Brigid**, which is now used by Brigidine Schools throughout the world, was originally designed by the Irish College of Heraldry.

The Cross in the top section of the badge is that of St Brigid, and the large cross of diamonds is taken from the badge of Bishop Daniel Delaney, who founded the Brigidine Sisters. The Cross of St Brigid is based on the simple cross of reeds which tradition says St Brigid used when teaching the truths of the Catholic faith. The small lamp in the centre of the badge represents the light of Christian faith and the light of learning.

The motto, "Strength and Gentleness" (Fortiter et Suaviter), was the motto of the Founder, Daniel Delaney. The motto sets before us the virtues of strength and gentleness, so characteristic of St Brigid.