

Responding to the invitation from Pope Francis for Churches in this Year of Mercy to be “an oasis of mercy” the Cathedral Parish in Ballarat invited neighbours, local community members, organisations and businesses to a community ideas workshop for the Cathedral garden and surrounds.

Community engagement forums were held on St Patrick's Day with Betsy-Sue Clarke from *Dirtscap Dreaming, gardens of spirit to nurture heart and soul* facilitating and leading the discussion. www.dirtscapedreaming.com.au The workshops were offered in two sessions, one in the morning in the St Patrick's Cathedral Hall and one in the evening at the Mechanics Institute.

Those who gathered at the forums were invited to reflect on the following questions when considering the Cathedral grounds and how a space and gardens for healing and reconciliation might be developed:

What makes you feel safe?

What helps to still you?

What makes you peaceful?

How do we honour memories and events from the past?



Enthusiastic discussion and interaction was embraced and the feedback from the forums will be developed into themes and concepts. Going forward these themes and concepts will then be expanded into designs which will be presented to the Cathedral precinct environment group for consideration and thought.



Thanks to all those who attended and particularly to the Cathedral steering committee – Bernadette Brouwers, Deneise Walsh, Frank Stuart, Jillian Hogbin, Joe De Losa, Leo Styles and Patrick Styles.