

The Ballarat Diocese is currently developing its Lay Pastoral Ministry Program. It is an important part of lay ministry that workers have an opportunity to talk and reflect with peers, to ask for and receive information related to their work, to have opportunities for training, formation and supervision and to have time for prayer and reflection.

One part of the program will be opportunities to access low-cost, short study courses for employees and volunteers who work in lay ministry in parishes. More information about this will be available very soon. Another part of the program is **Prayer and Share**, an informal gathering of lay employees in the Ballarat area who meet every couple of months to share ideas, information and prayer, as well as lunch. The group has also provided helpful feedback during the development of the study program. *Prayer and Share* started in a small way in 2014 and has gradually extended to more parishes. This year we are hoping to involve more lay pastoral workers from around the Diocese, either through encouraging other local groups, or through technology linkups. More information: amanda.smith@ballarat.catholic.org.au or 5337 7125.

The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God's word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach.

Pope Francis: *The Joy of the Gospel*

