

I Belong Programme for Children and Parents/Carers

"I Belong" expresses that as Christians we are part of a larger family of Christians who gather as a community at prayer especially at Sunday Mass. At Mass we are fed by God's word and by the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. Preparation to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion involves children and their parents having an experience of belonging to the community of the Church at prayer.

On Sundays, approximately once a month (occasionally more regularly), there will be an "I Belong" session after 11 am Mass. This will take place in St Joseph's church hall from 12.30 pm (after the Sunday teas) and last 1 hour and 15 minutes. There will be two groups: the children's group who will work with parish catechists, and the parents' group who will gather with the priests. Lunch snacks will be provided.

The children will work through one chapter of the "I Belong" workbook during the Sunday session, although there will also be some material to complete at home. At home, after the session, parents are asked to consolidate what the children have learned using the "I Belong – Parents Guide".

The parents group will discuss at an adult level the material that the children are learning in order to support parents in their faith development and in their discussion with the children.

Regular attendance at Sunday Mass at St Joseph's (Saturday Vigil 6 pm, Sunday 11 am) or wherever you are on Sunday is an essential part of preparation for the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

"I Belong" session dates:

Session 1: **Sunday 28 September 2025**

Session 2: **Sunday 26 October 2025**

Session 3: **Sunday 23 November 2025**

Session 4: **Sunday 7 December 2025**

Session 5: **Sunday 21 December 2025**

Session 6-11: **Dates to be published before the end of November**

First Holy Communion: **Sunday 7 June 2026**

Before First Communion Day in 2026 there will be a Saturday morning children's retreat from 10 am – 2 pm in a church hall. This will take place in conjunction with other parishes of the deanery, and information on the date and location will be shared in due course.