



ANNUAL
PARISH REPORT
2020

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LEADERSHIP TEAM

“2020” – who could have imagined the year that we have had, one that most of us have never experienced before! I’m sure that in many annual reports on the past year there will be a focus on the strange and even negative circumstances caused by the global pandemic. My mum, however, taught me the philosophy of looking at life and the events we encounter with a ‘glass half full’ mindset. So, in reflecting on our Parish over the past 12 months, I believe that there were a number of positive and even inspiring consequences arising from the life-altering changes due to COVID-19.

At the start of the year the Australian Church was looking forward to the deliberations of Plenary 2020. Here at OLF we began with the news that Fr Tony was to take responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and associated administration of our parish. Our Music Ministry had plans to bring to fruition some of the findings of their survey of parishioners and we were able to update the sound system in the church. The monthly night markets, Lending A Hand’s One Meal dinners, Peak Youth and the youth Masses were up and running as were the various Ministries that had begun to plan for the year ahead. The Alpha Programme was to begin in April and the liturgy team were planning the Easter liturgies which was to include celebrating the Sacraments of Initiation for a new family to the parish, the Scrymgeours, at the Easter Vigil.

But during the middle of March the pause button was pressed and parish life as we know it changed. From outdoor Masses one weekend to empty pews the next and then onto increasing restricted attendance numbers over the subsequent months, we have been able to make our parish Masses and weekly Eucharistic Adoration available to many through livestreaming and an online registering process. As well as this, Fr Tony led a 33 day retreat during September and October, the Scrymgeour family received the Sacraments of Initiation at a Sunday Mass and two beautiful Taizé services have been held, all of which have enriched the liturgical life of our parish.

While the earlier lockdown restrictions caused concern for our isolated and elderly parishioners, the members of St Vincent de Paul were able to offer assistance to any requests for shopping or the provision of essentials, Lending a Hand Team continued the One Meal service at Riverwood Community Centre every Monday evening, transferring from dine-in to a take-away service and the CWL, Friendship and Life Ascending groups created an intercessory prayer group offering prayers for all intentions received from our community. Another group of parishioners started a phone contact system regularly ringing those who may have needed support or just the chance to have a friendly chat over the phone. This then led to the Youth Mission Team, who are based in our parish, assisting Fr Tony with regular home visits to those parishioners who are still house-bound or unable to come to Mass.

So, while we know that some of our Ministries such as CWL and Friendship group are keen to return to their usual gatherings, we continue to ensure the safety of all at OLF. It is here that I would like to acknowledge the team of Mass ‘ushers’ who have been so reliable and diligent every week, not just making sure that we are following our Parish’s COVID Safety Plan, but being that welcoming face to all, even if it is behind a mask! Once it may have been a nod and a hello to others as we arrived at the church, now it is a warm welcome by name and a chat about their week which has brought closer connections within our parish community. I would also like to acknowledge Emma Williams for her significant contribution to the safety of all in our parish. Right from the start Emma has maintained a vigilant approach to the cleaning and sanitising of all of our Parish facilities. From early mornings, to after every Mass, gathering or meeting Emma has been amazing in the time and energy she has put into adhering to COVID cleaning protocols. So, on behalf of all at OLF, thank you Emma!

Finally, on behalf of the Leadership Team, I’d like to thank all Ministry leaders and their teams for managing so well in these changing times and continuing to serve our Parish community. To Clarissa,

our wonderful Parish Secretary, who has also put in so much time and effort into keeping our Parish communications and processes running so smoothly and efficiently – we thank you!

And to Fr Tony, who we are blessed to have with us during this unprecedented year. Your spiritual guidance, creative vision, boundless energy and ideas and your love and charismatic approach towards all in our community is recognised and very much appreciated.

*Deb Cummins
Chairperson
Leadership Team*

LITURGY COMMITTEE

On the weekend of 8/9 February, Fr. Chris announced that Fr. Tony would undertake the day-to-day leadership and associated administration of our Parish, with Fr. Chris remaining as Parish Priest. Fr. Tony took to his new role with seemingly boundless energy and full of ideas. His ministry to us this year, particularly during this time of COVID-19, has been wonderful!

In February, we were planning for Lent and the Holy Week and Easter Ceremonies. Our main theme for Lent was BE OPEN. On the First Sunday of Lent, 1 March, the words on the front wall of the church read BE OPEN TO BE LED BY THE SPIRIT. Little did we know what lay ahead. On 5 March, a meeting was held with Fr. Tony and Deacon Cameron to finalise our plans for Holy Week and Easter.

By the end of the week, our Parish had received advice from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in relation to the precautions we should take regarding COVID-19. The recommendations included:

- Holy Water should be temporarily removed from the stoups at the doors of the church;
- Alcohol-based gels or rubs should be available at the church entrances;
- When exchanging the Sign of Peace, parishioners should avoid shaking hands but say “Peace be with you” and nod;
- Parishes should cease distributing Holy Communion from the chalice until further notice; and
- The Body of Christ should only be administered in the hand.

The Masses for the Third Sunday of Lent, on 14/15 March, were to be the last, at this time, with a full congregation in the church. In his Pastoral Letter dated 18 March, Archbishop Anthony Fisher granted a dispensation from the usual obligation to participate in Sunday Mass.

By Saturday, 21 March, Fr. Tony had the Leadership Team, Liturgy Committee, the acolytes and other parishioners setting up for the weekend Masses in the car park to be live streamed into the church (which was limited to 80 parishioners, based on 4 square metres per person and the 1.5m social distancing). Over 300 parishioners attended the three weekend Masses.

By Monday, 23 March, strict guidelines were in force for the COVID-19 pandemic and Masses were “suspended”. Fr. Tony and Deacon Cameron were the only ones present in our church for the live streamed 9.15am Sunday Mass and the two weekday Masses for the following two weeks.

For the Holy Week Ceremonies, additional ministers (acolyte, readers and musicians) were allowed to assist at Masses. The Vatican and the Archdiocese provided instructions as to how the liturgies might be celebrated, taking into account the significant restrictions due to the COVID-19 emergency. Certain simplifications to the rites were permitted. Over 1,500 people watched the live streaming of the Holy Week liturgies.

After Easter, live streaming of the 9.15am Sunday Mass and the two weekday Masses continued but with a Reader being allowed to assist Fr. Tony and Deacon Cameron. A special Mass was celebrated on Saturday, 25 April, for Anzac Day.

It was sad that we were unable to recognise the wonderful mothers and grandmothers in our Parish the way that we always do on Mother's Day.

By Friday, 5 May, restrictions had been eased to allow 10 "worshippers" to attend Mass along with "workers" (priest, deacon, acolyte, reader, musicians). A registration system was implemented for the normal weekend and weekday Masses, as well as additional Masses on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings, with 10 "worshippers" being allowed in the church and hall. Ushers were organised to facilitate these Masses.

From 1 June, we were allowed 50 "worshippers" in the church and the hall for Mass.

By 4/5 July, with 1.5m physical distancing and 4 square metres per person, we were allowed 85 "worshippers" in the church for Mass – 67 in the nave of the church and 18 in the gallery. We were also allowed 35 "worshippers" in the hall for Mass. This has continued to be the case.

Live-streaming of the 9:15am Sunday Mass and the Wednesday and Friday Masses has continued.

With the increased numbers of parishioners able to attend Mass, monthly Liturgy Rosters were re-introduced.

On Saturday, 15 August, we celebrated The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, normally a holy day of obligation.

Similar to Mother's Day, it was sad that we were unable to recognise the wonderful fathers and grandfathers in our Parish the way that we always do on Father's Day.

Sadly, we have bid farewell to Chris and Paula Bounds who have left the Parish and moved to Canberra. Chris and Paula were regulars at our Sunday Night Mass with Chris providing music and Paula as a reader. We thank them for their contribution to enhancing our liturgy and wish them every success for the future.

Our sincere thanks to Fr. Tony, who has ministered to us in such a wonderful way, during this very difficult time. Our thanks also to Fr. Adam and Deacon Cameron. Our thanks to Clarissa, our dedicated Parish Secretary. Our thanks to our Parish Leadership Team for their work during this time. Lastly, our thanks to the many wonderful parishioners, who have helped with our liturgies.

David Payne

Celebrating the Sacraments at Our Lady of Fatima Peakhurst

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the preparation for and celebration of the Sacraments of Confirmation, Eucharist and Penance were postponed for 2020. This was communicated to the parents and carers of those children who were due to prepare for these sacraments this year.

With the July 1 easing of certain restrictions, the Sacramental Team of Our Lady of Fatima Peakhurst met to discuss the current situation and plan ahead. Based on the safety and hygiene measures, the social distancing norm of 1.5 metres and the 4 square metre per person rule that has to be adhered to, we evaluated the following:

- The holding of preparation sessions for parents and children
- Time needed for sufficient preparation in readiness for the reception of the Sacraments
- Number of guests permissible for the celebration of Sacraments and the multiple dates needed to accommodate all children
- Availability of the bishop and priests

After much discernment and evaluating our preparedness to go ahead, the team decided to postpone the Sacraments of Confirmation, Eucharist and Penance for 2020 until next year.

Parents and carers were assured that this will not affect enrolments into any Catholic schools, primary or secondary. The feeder schools will be notified of the decision that OLF Peakhurst has made for 2020.

In 2021, we will resume all Sacraments at OLF Peakhurst for new cohorts and will offer all our candidates and their parents the wonderful opportunity to explore and to become initiated into the Catholic faith.

Tosca Galluzzo
Sacramental Co-ordinator

CATECHISTS

Preparing for and starting teaching SRE (Scripture) each and every year is a challenge. This year was no different – we struggled to find enough teachers and, for the first time ever, had to let one school know that we would not be able to supply catechists for their students during Term 1. We were determined to rectify this situation for Term 2, but of course that was not to be!

After only a few weeks back in the classroom (SRE always commences a month or so later than the start of the school year) we were told that the Department of Education had decided that no external visitors would be allowed into schools. Very sadly, we advised all our catechists that they would not be teaching until further notice.

Support from the CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine), which organises all the catechists in the Sydney Archdiocese, has been strong and constant (sounds like a hymn!). The Faith Education Officers have worked hard to keep us informed regarding possible return to the classrooms and have provided a wonderful series of inspiring Zoom seminars on a very broad range of topics to support our teaching and our own faith.

After a term and a half out of the classroom the wonderful news came that, as of the first week in Term 3, we would be allowed back to teach with, of course, lots of COVID-safe provisions. The CCD quickly provided us with amended syllabuses to follow to ensure that our students would learn the key lessons for their year despite the reduced number of weeks we would have to teach.

Teaching in this time brings its unique challenges as we are urged to not touch the children's books or to have as little contact with anything in the school as possible. No more handouts or providing colouring pencils; nor singing or chanting; no handing out of books (do you know how long it takes 6-year-olds to hand out 13 books?) and on it goes. However, with the support of our classroom teachers, the guidance of the CCD staff and the prayerful support of our team and parish, we are back on track.

Our wonderful team at Peakhurst attended a socially-distanced meeting in our newly-refurbished meeting room to plan our approach for Term 3. This was a joy-filled occasion and nearly all of our members have been able to return to teaching. We were very happy to have a newly-trained catechist join us.

With some doubling-up of classes and teachers, we have been able to teach at all three schools during Term 3 and hope to continue to do so until the end of 2020 – each week, filled with faith, hope and love, teaching 162 of our parish children.

Julia Goff
on behalf of the OLF Catechists

CHILDREN'S LITURGY / SUNDAY SCHOOL

OLF Sunday School aims to allow the younger members of our parish an experience of the Gospel in a child friendly environment, whilst giving them an opportunity to be more involved in the Mass and the parish. At the outset of the year, things seemed to have been picking up. Numbers were on the rise, we had expanded our Sunday School teacher base in 2019, which had now allowed us to roster on 2 teachers (1 leader and 1 helper) each week. This was great for our WWC responsibility, with 9 permanent teachers and helpers on our roster as well as 3 reserves who could be called upon as required. Unfortunately, COVID-19 impacted our Sunday School Program quite significantly in 2020, forcing all of us to make dramatic changes.

With Deb Cummins, we had wanted to explore the idea of having a Children's Family Mass once each term (Terms 1-3, leaving Christmas Eve as the Family Mass for Term 4), where the children could participate in the Prayers of the Faithful and readings, as well as the Offertory, and really be a part of the celebration. This was meant to coincide with a morning tea as provided by the Welcoming Committee, or if not, we would arrange a special children's morning tea for these Masses. This was obviously on the backburner as we responded to the new challenges posed by the Lockdown of our country, and in fact the world.

Having churches closed early on in the year really introduced us all to the world of social media with OLF Parish adapting by bringing Mass to each and every one of us in our own homes. Being able to still 'attend' Mass during the lockdown was a very special thing. It gave families the opportunity for some down time reflecting while still in some way coming together with the OLF community. Leading up to the first live streamed Mass, I thought about Sunday School and the children who would be watching Mass with their families, and had the idea of still giving them access to the weekly activities they would normally do during Sunday School at church. With the support of Fr Tony, Clarissa and Jenni Payne, I began gathering weekly activities, Gospel readings and reflection 'discussions' for the children each week that parents were invited to download from the website or via the link on our parish Facebook page. Each week, a craft idea that relates to either the readings for that week or the Gospel, was also posted.

Our main celebrations of Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day were unfortunately 'cancelled'. We had toyed with the idea of perhaps including some sort of involvement for children in these Masses even via video or music; however, the logistics and legalities quashed this and craft ideas and templates were posted with the worksheets for the children in lieu of our usual activities.

As church began to 'open', Clarissa and I explored other ways to engage the children. With the suggestion from Fr Tony, in an attempt to encourage families to physically return to Mass, we have begun preparing printed 'packs' that have the printed worksheets and discussions available to the children who register for any of the 3 weekend Masses. The worksheets are still available for downloading and printing at home for families who choose to live-stream. It has created an extra task for Clarissa as she collates the numbers from the registrations and prints the packs just before each Mass. When available, I will assist on the Sunday morning printing to alleviate extra workload for Clarissa. We are hopeful that this adaptation generates a positive result and encourages families and children back to church during these uncertain times, hopeful for a smooth transition back to the Sunday School Program that we once knew. I look forward to the time when we can recommence the Sunday School program at OLF, but until then we will continue to upload and print worksheets each week as a small way to keep in touch with the many wonderful children of our parish.

I am yet to discuss our options for the Christmas Pageant, which is usually our most anticipated and enjoyed event for our Sunday School program. We would usually begin the recruitment campaign in the upcoming week however, I am not confident about this years project.

I believe the Sunday School program is a vital part of the weekend Masses, so to have been able to still maintain the program in digital form throughout COVID-19 restrictions has been encouraging, and I strongly hope that Children's Liturgy will continue to take a special part in Mass celebrations and of course one day soon, return to normal functioning.

Marissa De Marcellis

YOUTH MINISTRY

Kathleen Kennedy has been our parish Youth Minister since 2017 and she recently resigned from the position. Due to other commitments related to the completion of her university studies and commencement of work, she was no longer able to continue to give the time commitment she believed is necessary, and would like to commit, to make the group flourish and thrive. She completed her paid employment as of the end of Term 3 but she is happy to support the future direction of the Youth Ministry in any way that she can and would happily be involved more casually in the Youth Ministry in the parish.

Kathleen provided the Leadership Team with some suggested options for the future and these will be explored in 2021. We thank Kathleen for her commitment to the Youth Ministry in our parish and wish her well for her career in the teaching profession.

In the last month, a Young Adults Fellowship group has commenced, and their first meeting was attended by 14 young people and the 10 members of the Youth Mission Team (YMT). Fr Tony is taking the lead in the formation of this group, which will meet on a fortnightly basis.

Below are relevant excerpts from Kathleen's recent report on Youth Ministry to the Leadership Team.

2019:

- Youth group commenced in Term 3- since then there have been about 15-20 young people consistently attending the youth group. Age range is from Years 6-8. Involved games, faith talks about the 10 commandments (Term 3) and Advent/Christmas (Term 4) and shared dinner.
- PeakYouth had a bowling night to celebrate the end of the year as well as a Christmas party in the hall.
- YMT attended and supported the youth group on many occasions
- Fundraising for parishioners to attend WYD.

2020:

- Youth Masses continued
- Similar number of young people attending PeakYouth (15-20). YMT attended and introduced themselves in Term 1.
- COVID-19 put a pause on these events
- One Zoom meeting was held- 7 young people attended. Paused these to make sure we were meeting safeguarding requirements. Lost momentum and interest in Zoom meetings.

Jenni Payne
for the Leadership Team

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE PEAKHURST BRANCH

For the CWL Peakhurst, and the entire Parish, this has been a year to remember. We had meetings in February and March and registered our 25 members with the Sydney CWL. We were looking forward to our regular meetings, outings and excursions only to find ourselves in lockdown as March rolled on. We had commenced selling the annual Silver Circle tickets and Number 1 was completely sold. Then the world as we knew it stopped. Masses were held in the car park with no contact between Parishioners. We survived and progressed to Mass on Facebook. Not all of our members use computers but those who could joined for the celebration. The Silver Circle was suspended to be sold when things returned to normal. Although we were not able to meet, our members kept in contact with one another by phone.

As Mass has since returned, with COVID restrictions we are seeing one another in real life. The Silver Circle has been sold and the first 6 weeks draws have been won and distributed to the winners. Funds raised by the Silver Circle are directed to the City Branch for distribution to the Project of the Year. Cheques to CWL City and various charities have now been distributed.

The Committee held a meeting on 21 October and, with approval, will have a meeting on 18 November to see all our members before Christmas. Again, we thank the entire Parish for the support and care in these difficult times and for their continued generous financial support of our fundraising. In particular, we would like to thank Jenni & Deb for their care and help while on the Parish Council.

CWL Peakhurst Committee

President: Maureen Burgess

Secretary: Mary Branagan and Marie Ryan

FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The first Friendship day for the year was 16 January. It was great to see many regulars returning for another year. While we had 20 guests when we were forced into lockdown, on return we will have 14. We have 10 Helpers, ably managed by the amazing Helen Cozzi and the caring Annette Dunn. Guests are picked up by the helpers or find their own way to the Parish Centre by 10am every 2nd Thursday. With the tables set for our first cuppa and bickie, the chatter commences. We settle into games of Rummy Cub or sometimes card games. Every 3rd meeting we play Bingo. This is a hoot. Everybody wins at least one prize and the luckier winners give the next winnings to the nearest loser. Lunch is served at noon and consists of fresh sandwiches and cakes made by the helpers. More tea, coffee and chatter with the guests being returned home by about 1pm. This just leaves the clean-up and then the helpers go home for a rest. A great day is had by all.

With the guests and helpers ranging from 70 to 101, there are lots of stories and care is taken to include everyone in the fun. It would be really good to have some new helpers to strengthen the ranks. We can promise a rewarding experience.

As everything is on hold with COVID-19, we have not been able to meet since March. Helen and Annette have been tireless in keeping in touch with the guests over the past 6 months.

Until we meet again, God bless all our guests and helpers.

Marie Ryan

on behalf of Helen and Annette

LENDING A HAND

A “Christmas in July” mulled wine tasting was held after the Saturday night Mass in July 2019 together with a raffle, the proceeds (\$2,531) going to St Joseph’s Riverwood to assist in their rebuilding of the church roof.

Also in July, we donated funds to purchase furniture for the library at the remote Mornington Island State School at a cost of \$6,104. Mornington Island is in the Gulf of Carpentaria and most of the students are Indigenous. Our donation was to furnish their library, which had little furniture and previously students just sat on the floor. Some of the furniture was covered in Aboriginal design material and was supplied out of Cairns. We received great feedback with photos.

As a result of Fr Steve Fletcher’s connection with St Teresa’s Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Community Centre in the suburb of Garbutt in Townsville, a donation of \$5,000 was provided in August 2019. This was to enable a part-time person to be employed to have St Teresa’s doors open on a regular basis for the community, especially for reflection, to come and chat to elders and the local priest, and engage with church life, to build St Teresa’s church back up again. The city of Townsville has a population of approximately 200,000 of whom approximately 12,000 or more are of Aboriginal and Islander descent.

Feedback received from Bourke, where we had assisted the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese in 2018-2019 with funds for drought relief, was that they had received good rain, although they were still in need of more of the same.

Our parishioner group continued to attend at St. Canice’s, providing meals to the less fortunate in the Kings Cross area, prior to the shut-down, and in May 2020 Lending A Hand donated \$1,000 for a fundraiser held by St Canice’s.

In September 2019, a mental health presentation was arranged in the Parish Hall, delivered by external consultants, which was available to all parishioners and to representatives of the groups who support the Monday One Meal program.

Lending A Hand attended and staffed a stall to provide food for guests at the “turning of the sod” for Grace’s Place at Doonside in September 2019. Grace’s Place is a \$9.95 million world first community facility, which will offer refuge for children traumatised by homicide. Lending A Hand has been associated with the Homicide Victims Support Group for some years.

The Parish donated \$1,000, and several members of Lending A Hand visited a charity called “Goodwill Only” in Wollongong, enjoying a meal. This charity provides simple meals and is a drop-in centre for those doing it tough in the Illawarra area. We were most impressed with the young man running this operation and it was a fun outing with a large group travelling together by car to Wollongong.

We investigated the needs of drought affected areas through contact provided by the St Vincent de Paul Peakhurst conference, but the representative of Vinnies in Scone advised that situation appeared to be under control and so we opted to assist bushfire affected areas instead.

In March, the Lending A Hand team travelled to Milton via Berry to show support to businesses impacted by the bushfires in the early part of 2020, through spending our own money on meals and other purchases.

In May we provided \$7,500 and arranged the supply of 3 x 22,000 litre water tanks for the village of Kiah, located not far from Eden on the south coast of NSW. We also donated a further \$600 to partially fill the tanks with water. The original tanks had been destroyed by the bushfires that had devastated this and the surrounding area.

Providing meals for people in the local area at the Riverwood Community Centre continues every Monday night under the "One Meal" banner. Groups from our own parish and nearby schools and parishes each take a turn to supply and serve food around four times a year, with a member of Lending A Hand attending each week to ensure everything runs smoothly. The pandemic has temporarily caused changes to this activity, with pre-packed home-cooked meals being distributed each week at the hall, rather than serving the food in the Community Centre, due to the restrictions imposed by authorities in relation to the number of people attending. Normal attendance at this function each Monday is around 70 or more guests.

Donations made by Lending A Hand during the year were from an activity conducted by Lending A Hand, or from the allocated funds from the parish, or other donations received. 10% of the weekly envelopes and monthly credit card parishioner contributions are allocated annually to Lending A Hand.

Tony Thorpe
Chair

ST VINCENT DE PAUL PEAKHURST CONFERENCE

Our Conference members are still not able to conduct meetings or to meet with clients face-to-face. We interview our clients by telephone and deliver assistance in the form of food packages and food vouchers as 'Drop and Run' visits. The number of assistance requests continues to be lower than usual due to the government stimulus payments to Jobseeker and Jobkeeper clients however, we are now receiving calls from new clients who have not previously called and we anticipate this trend will continue as stimulus payments reduce.

We received an excellent response to our Winter Appeal, raising slightly more than in 2019, thanks to the generosity of our wonderful parishioners and the support of Fr Tony, the Leadership Team, Emma Williams and the Foodies Markets.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions we had to abandon the Annual Combined Regional Vinnies Mass for the St George and Sutherland Shire conferences, which was to be hosted by OLF Peakhurst Vinnies Conference in November this year.

The traditional OLF Peakhurst Parish Vinnies Christmas Hamper Appeal will have some challenges in 2020 as we will not be able to distribute tags to parishioners from baskets in the Church foyers. Instead, we have listed the various items we seek to prepare the hampers in the next edition of the Bark. We will collect hamper donations in baskets located in the front foyer of the Church, at the Parish House and, for donors who are not able to drop off goods, our members will collect donations from their homes. Vinnies will be requesting donations between 14 November and 6 December. Our 2020 Annual Christmas Envelope Appeal will be held on the weekend of the 5 & 6 December.

Our Vinnies members thank the Leadership Team and Fr Tony for their ongoing support and encouragement which allows us to continue the Good works of St Vincent de Paul.

May God bless you all.

Mike Flanagan
President

WELCOMING TEAM

Our function of being a friendly face or a happy smile to welcome parishioners and visitors to our parish has not had the opportunity to function very well this year. Normally we have a bi-monthly morning tea after the 9:15am Mass and hopefully this will start again soon.

We did have a cuppa after the “Remembrance Mass” last November and this really was a time to talk, comfort, laugh and remember those we have loved but who are no longer with us. Our team is very open and to offer someone a simple cup of tea can just ease the burden they may be feeling that day.

Then in the lead up to Christmas we had the chance to share Christmas Cake and coffee with one another prior to the Christmas holiday break. 2020 sprang into being and yes another cuppa was needed as we celebrated 30years of service for one of our parishioners. Sadly after this event the world seemed to tilt and we lost our balance slightly, as we found ourselves unable to attend church services.

The mechanics of the parish continued but that personal contact was not available.

In that time, although not physically welcoming parishioners and visitors to the parish, we have tried to stay in contact and I would like to thank the Welcoming Team who are so supportive to the needs of the parish. Thank you to Robert DeMarcellis, Dennis Day, Connie Alifano, Noelene Hammond, Careena Craven, Anita Aley, Joanna Miks and Wendy Scrymgeour. These people are a small light in a broad community of caring parishioners and I thank them for always being where they are needed.

As well as offering a welcoming cuppa, we also look after the “Welcoming Book”. This book is kept at the back of the church for new parishioners to sign. A member of the Welcoming Team then rings to say hello and tell new parishioners about the activities, and opportunities to get involved, within the parish. We also invite them to our next morning tea, so we can introduce them and they can build relationships with fellow parishioners. Hopefully this tradition will be able to return in 2021.

Maria Vaux

OPERATIONS

FINANCE

For the financial year to 30th June 2020, the Parish achieved a surplus of \$8,250. This was possible largely due to assistance provided by the Federal Government via JobKeeper (\$9,000) and a cash flow grant of \$10,000 for the April-June quarter, together with fantastic support from our monthly credit card contributors, almost all of whom continued to give their full commitment during the COVID-19 restrictions, and continue to give. Many of our envelope and other contributors have also provided contributions recently, since we have been allowed to increase attendance at Mass.

As at 30th June 2020, we had a total of \$58,544 in the Church Bank Account, and \$364,877 in Term Deposits.

Due to current restrictions, attendance at the weekend Masses has been down significantly, which has restricted some parishioners from providing their normal contributions. The Saturday markets have been a plus, given that the monthly Friday night markets have not been possible, and the hall rental ceased for a period but some of the renters of the hall have recently been able to recommence. However, parishioners' contributions remain our primary source of income, and so we ask for your continuing support, if you are able, particularly given that government assistance is due to be withdrawn, or reduced, soon.

Over the past year there has been significant expense on parish assets. The sound system in the church has been replaced, security cameras installed, and improvements made to ensure safety of parishioners and others, using church and parish grounds. Over the past 12 months, around \$80,000 has been spent on these improvements. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic, parishioners have not necessarily been able to appreciate the benefits of these. Apart from the security aspect, the cameras will, in the future, enable people to access the church during the day, where currently that is not possible. The sound system had been patched up over the years and has now been replaced. An accessible toilet has been installed and improvements made to the meeting room attached to the hall.

Based on current circumstances, it is likely that many of the same restrictions will remain for some time in respect to the numbers that will be permitted in the church, and so we will need to incur some expense to upgrade communications to continue attendance at weekend Masses in the Parish Hall. The portable projector needs to be replaced, together with sound, to provide for the overflow of parishioners who cannot be accommodated in the church itself.

Once again, thank you for your financial and other support. Please continue this support if you are able.

Tony Thorpe
Chairperson, Finance Committee

Markets Update

The Peakhurst Foodies Market has been conducted in our parish grounds for about 6 years. The event runs from 4-9pm on the last Friday of the month and served to satisfy the foodies, the local community, the children and give an opportunity for families to get together at the end of the week. COVID-19 restrictions brought this to a halt for most of 2020.

In May, as COVID restrictions eased, the Peakhurst Farmers Market commenced to allow growers from rural NSW to sell their fresh produce directly to the public. The market runs from 8am to 1pm on Saturdays. Every effort is made for the public and the vendors to be COVID-safe.

Apart from giving the growers an outlet for their produce and their customers a chance to avail of fresh, good quality fruit and vegetables, the market raises very important revenue for the parish.

John Fitzpatrick

Leadership Team Markets Liaison

Parish Centre Update

Over the years, our Parish Centre facilities (hall and meeting room) have provided several groups with a place to come together to share their craft, their dancing and fitness, their music, their ideas and discussions, their common passions. It has seen its fair share of parties, meetings, lunches and fashion parades. Having a good gathering space has also allowed us to expand our Sacramental Program to allow a greater engagement from parents in the church while their children are going through the lessons in the hall.

Since the closure of churches and gathering facilities back in April 2020 due to COVID-19, the usage of our hall and meeting room dropped down to zero.

Once we were allowed a maximum of 10 people in the church, Fr Tony decided to celebrate Mass every day of the week to allow as many parishioners as possible to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist. This necessitated the use of the hall so we could accommodate an additional 10 people there and they watched the Mass being livestreamed from the church.

The number of worshippers at our parish has now increased to 115 in the church and 40 in the hall. We have scaled back the number of Masses to Wednesday and Friday mornings as well as the weekend Masses on Saturday evening, Sunday morning and Sunday evening. Based on the current attendance, we now only need the hall for our Saturday Vigil and Sunday morning Masses, and this has allowed some of our regular hire groups to return.

Currently, we hire out the hall on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and Friday mornings. Some groups use the hall once a month on a Monday and Tuesday and some of our ministries are slowly coming back to having gatherings while being mindful of the 4sqm per person rule.

Clarissa Finan

Parish Secretary

COMMUNICATIONS

Never has communication been as important to our parishioners as in this current challenging time. It's amazing how such a simple thing as a parish bulletin, which we've always associated with the weekly Mass over the years, can become something you miss when it's not available.

Fr Tony and the current Leadership Team have done an amazing job in rising to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 restrictions and identifying solutions, and the people to implement them, to fill the void caused by the loss of the weekly contact at Mass. A parishioner database was collated and culled from various sources. Email updates and texts to phones were sent; letters were hand-delivered to those who didn't have the technology. All of this was done by a team of dedicated volunteers.

Regular updates were placed on the website and, once people could return to Mass, a facility to register was made available, together with the ability to donate online.

If there is one silver lining of COVID-19, it's that we got to know our parishioners a little more. They were no longer just a face at Mass but we now know their name and perhaps a little bit more about how they are coping with 2020.

Parish Website Update

In late 2018, a website working party was formed with Charles Centorrino, Clarissa Finan and myself as members. We then met with Fr Chris to seek his opinion and advice. In 2019, the working party investigated possible providers and sought quotes for the creation of a new website. After careful consideration, a decision was made to proceed using our current provider. Over a number of months, we explored a range of church websites and determined a suggested site plan. We met with our provider and eventually with our site developer who was implementing our ideas. We also sought input from the various ministries regarding their content. Hoping to improve the quality of our photographs on the website, we advertised in the Bulletin for photographic support and Michael Spring from Washboard Productions, a contact of a parishioner, offered to take photos free of charge. These were taken on a few occasions during 2019 with the final ones in March 2020.

There have been a number of holdups along the way. COVID-19 certainly has not helped! After many months, the development website was finally handed over to Clarissa to populate. During this process we also made a number of changes to the design. We are very fortunate to have Clarissa as the website administrator as she has Computer Science qualifications and experience!

In the last couple of months, the site was shared with the LT for feedback. This has precipitated the LT decision to explore further development options. As we have all discovered, Fr Tony has a great interest in technology and he is keen to seek advice from a Sydney-based UX/UI (user experience / user interface) designer. This has all meant that the website content and design will be more targeted to our key stakeholders based on research in this area. Key stakeholders will be recruited and interviewed and this will be important data to inform the final design of a high-quality, mobile-friendly site for our parish, which will be easy to update and navigate by a diverse range of users.

Jenni Payne

The BARK

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting, we have had 4 issues of our parish magazine. Under the leadership of Julia Goff, the team has produced an issue for each quarter of this year, with the final one well underway. Well done to Julia and Ruth Meagher on the production side, and our gratitude to all the contributors of wonderful articles, keeping us all informed and in touch in this potentially isolating time.

Information & Technology

With the installation of the CCTV monitoring equipment and the NBN roll out, it has become necessary to re-arrange the computer/Internet equipment in the printer room of the parish office.

Charles Centorrino

Sound System Upgrade

A major project undertaken this year was an upgrade to the church sound system, a task that was necessary after increasing inconsistencies with sound quality. After seeking quotes from several companies, it was eventually decided to offer the work to *Invisible Sound*, a company that had been recommended to us from several other parishes. The work, which included a new speaker system, new sound mixers, new and additional cabling, new microphones and other supplementary equipment was completed in February at a cost of \$31,696.

Tony MacDougal (Project Manager)

Camera Surveillance System

Back in March, during pre-COVID times, we were considering opening the church mid-week to allow people to visit and spend time in personal prayer. In order to do this, we thought it necessary to install internal surveillance cameras so that daily monitoring and recording would be available to safeguard the premises.

Around this time an unauthorised dumping of a large load of mulch occurred on the parish grounds. This had happened several times previously so it was decided to also install a set of external cameras so that monitoring could also be made of the church car park and grounds.

Again, we sought quotes from various companies and, after being extremely pleased with the work completed by *Invisible Sound* with the sound system, it was decided to offer them the work with the surveillance cameras. This project was completed at the end of July at a cost of \$11,570.

Tony MacDougal (Project Manager)

MAINTENANCE

Planned maintenance activities during 2020 were refocused in the light of COVID-19 restrictions.

Major works completed:

- Disabled toilet
- Replacement furniture and fittings to hall meeting room
- Skylight damaged in high winds and replaced under insurance
- Sound system replaced
- Security video surveillance installed
- Repairs to roof of parish house

Minor maintenance:

- Church window refurbishment of some windows not addressed in 2019
- Various minor repairs to lighting, locks, appliances and plumbing
- Completion of fixing of pews to floor with brackets to support centre legs
- Garden and lawn maintenance
- Tree inspections and removal as necessary
- Hazzard reduction through removal of unsafe lighting in car park
- Air-conditioning service
- Pest inspection and treatment to hall, church, and office
- Process for converting to NBN commenced
- Telecoms and IT equipment shelving installed
- Routine fire and safety inspections

Discussions are in progress with the Finance Committee chair regarding the budget for maintenance in 2021.

Steven Graham