

The Bark

Our Lady of Fatima
Peakhurst

June 2020 Issue

In this 32-page issue...

- ◇ *Leadership – guiding us through Covid-19*
- ◇ *From Father Tony – a new way of life*
- ◇ *Keeping us all connected*
- ◇ *Liturgy news*
- ◇ *Parishioner profiles*
- ◇ *Children's liturgy at a distance*
- ◇ *Finances – how Covid-19 will affect our parish*
- ◇ *Family times – the unexpected joys*
- ◇ *Long service leave – at home (not away)*
- ◇ *#georgesrivereats – supporting our local restaurants*
- ◇ *St Vincent de Paul*
- ◇ *Dinner is (still) being served at One Meal*
- ◇ *Foodies Markets*
- ◇ *Music on the move*
- ◇ *Lending a hand – cakes, flowers, drought assistance and water tanks!*

...and more

DEAR PARISH FAMILY,

The rapid spread of Covid-19 shocked all of us and has had a significant impact on everyone's lives. We are aware that many people in our parish and their families have lost their jobs or have had their incomes reduced; there have been those who have been ill and sadly, people have died during this time and have not been able to be mourned as a community in the church or elsewhere. Many of our parishioners have been isolated and lonely and we have all struggled with the changes to our daily lives. There has been much sadness and hardship.

In this issue of *The Bark* we have chosen to celebrate the positives and to highlight the many good things that have come out of this immense challenge while keeping our prayers and thoughts with those who have suffered and continue to struggle.

The Bark Team

A new way of Life

On 31 May we commemorated Pentecost, one of the great feasts of the Church when we celebrate new life; the new life which came to us with the birth of the church two millennia ago. In every passing year we call upon a renewed and fresh outpouring of the Spirit to fill us again with newness. In a way, that newness came even earlier this year as we had to respond to a whole new way of life with COVID restrictions and isolation measures.

The last few months have been a journey of rapid changes that needed timely responses. The quick move to have an outdoor Mass on the March 21/22 weekend when the first restrictions were imposed was followed by the a total lockdown which led to getting all the technology sorted to take Masses live to the homes of our parishioners, to struggling to find contact details of parishioners and finally coming up with a contact database, to researching and setting up the simplest, most efficient and sustainable method of livestreaming, to establishing groups that would work on enquiring about the elderly and vulnerable of the parish, to setting up an intercessory group to offer prayer support for all those in need of prayer, to getting used to imagining a congregation behind the camera, to feel spiritually in communion with parishioners through gazing at the photos of many who sent them in which were displayed in the pews, some in the very places that those parishioners usually sit in.

All this happened while we were being vigilant in adhering to the constantly-evolving guidelines from the Government and the Archdiocese. It has been quite a journey. The highlight was certainly the celebration of an Easter Triduum with a virtually empty church; a never-before-imagined scenario and hopefully one we will never see again. However, all this did bring a new way of life; no people coming to church but the church being taken to people's homes.

While we have kept hearing horror stories and experiences of people badly affected by this pandemic, there has been so much good that has started happening. Families have spent more time with each other, people have looked out for each other, old forgotten friendships and relationships have come back alive. People have started getting creative and thinking out of the box. Virtual meetings and events have started becoming the order of the day. This has become, again, a new way of life.

In the crux of all this, I heard from many people taking time to reflect about the "big questions": "what is life all about?" "What does God want of me in all this? Death...? Life after...?" "These questions have invariably led many to reorder their priorities and turn back to placing trust totally in Jesus and desiring to be led by the Holy Spirit – the bearer and giver of life.

For last 11 years I have been saying a prayer first thing every morning, calling on the Holy Spirit. In these last months it has brought even more meaning to me. The prayer is attributed to Cardinal Joseph Mercier. Cardinal Mercier was a famous psychologist and philosopher of the 19th century.

O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore you.

Enlighten, guide, strengthen and console me.

Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it.

I promise to submit to everything that you ask of me and to accept all that you allow to happen to me. Just show me what is your will.

May we, as members of the parish, grow eagerly desirous to fulfil God's will alone. May we listen to that inner prompting of the Holy Spirit and respond bearing fresh fruit of love, joy and peace in abundance.

Fr Tony Alex MGL



From the Leadership Team

Our parish's journey through Covid -19

Over the past few months we have heard people say that we are living in strange times. Others say that we are experiencing unprecedented events that will forever be part of history. For young and old, for our friends and family, we can safely say that these have surely been difficult times.

A quote, which I read recently, epitomised to me how the Our Lady of Fatima Parish community has responded to the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic:

“Seeds of faith are always within us; sometimes it takes a crisis to nourish and encourage their growth.”

When I think back to late March, when this all began, we were faced with minor changes in our Church liturgy – no holy water, no contact for the sign of peace and not receiving Holy Communion under both forms. Then, all of a sudden, restrictions on indoor gatherings were forced upon us with a limit of 100 people allowed for liturgical celebrations inside the church. Within a week Fr Tony, the Leadership Team and various ministry leaders and members had organised for the weekend outdoor Masses with livestreaming inside the church. Mass was celebrated on the top of the steps at the car park entrance, parishioners sat in chairs in the carpark at safe social distances and some parishioners even sat in their cars. It was a very memorable weekend. However, this was to be for one time only as churches were then closed indefinitely.

The Leadership Team met and took into consideration the pastoral and spiritual needs of our community. The first quandary was how could we celebrate Mass with our parish community especially as we were approaching Holy Week and the Easter Triduum. With the help of parishioner, Peter Esho, Father Tony, set up a system of livestreaming our liturgical celebrations through our Parish Facebook page. A further challenge was how we could communicate that this was happening to our parish community. Parish databases were compiled with email addresses and mobile numbers enabling information to be sent out to well over 1000 people. A team of parishioners hand delivered letters to another 100 addresses. This all occurred within a few days.

The Liturgy and Music ministries planned the moving and meaningful Holy Week and Easter Triduum liturgies with our church sanctuary looking beautiful and

our celebrants Fr Tony, Fr Adam and Deacon Cameron giving very thought-provoking and heartening homilies. Eucharistic Adoration continued to take place each Friday evening and the celebration of other special Masses for Anzac Day, Mother's Day and our Parish feast day on May 13 enabled us to continue our spiritual experiences.

The lockdown restrictions caused concern for our isolated and elderly parishioners. St Vincent de Paul offered 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.

Then the good news came in mid-May that ten parishioners would be permitted to attend Mass in the church. Fr Tony immediately offered to celebrate Mass every weekday and resume the three weekend Masses. The hall was suggested as a second venue allowing a further ten parishioners to watch the Mass via livestream and to receive Holy Communion. The Leadership Team, the Liturgy and Music ministries, our Parish Secretary Clarissa, Emma Williams and a Livestream Tech team led by Peter Esho and Kathleen and Andrew Kennedy worked within a week to organise a roster and ticketing system to enable as many parishioners as possible to attend at least one Mass by the end of May. Many of those who have already attended Masses have found it very moving to be able to return to the church, to receive Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and to join together with others in our community, even if it is at a very safe social distance.

What the future holds is unknown but our parish community can be assured that, under the spiritual guidance of Fr Tony, Fr Adam and Deacon Cameron, and the efforts and support of many at Our Lady of Fatima, our faith will continue to grow and be nourished in these uncertain times.

Deb Cummins, Leadership Team

Keeping OLF parishioners connected

At the end of 2019, when he assumed responsibility for OLF, Fr Tony raised the need for a parish database to aid communication. Only a few months ago our world was turned upside down by the Coronavirus, which became the driving force behind the development of a database to assist communication with the parish community.

In the third week of March parish communication with parishioners was undergoing rapid change. The parish website home page was updated by Clarissa to include a letter about the indoor/outdoor Masses and guidelines for the weekend of 21 and 22 March. A few days later, the Archbishop “suspended” all Masses and the task of developing the means to communicate with all parishioners commenced. With his seemingly boundless energy and ideas, Fr Tony has been the driving force behind communication with parishioners. He hasn’t missed a beat!

Clarissa commenced a mailing list of parishioner contacts by setting up a database from current lists, the recent Bark online subscriptions and the Sacramental database. Someone else categorised this data, which was checked by the Leadership Team (LT) for double entries, accurate contact details (which has been a challenge) and parishioners who no longer live in the parish.

Father Tony also had plans for live streaming current weekday and Sunday morning Masses. He enlisted the assistance of parishioner Peter Esho for this as well as mail merging advice for parishioners who required a printout of hand-delivered parish communication. Fr Tony also asked the LT to devise a plan and develop processes for anyone requesting or needing support. The LT meeting of 1 April devoted to our new situation was held over Zoom, which in itself created a range of connection issues for some in our group! A WhatsApp group also commenced at this time for urgent messages among the team. As we continue, we are improving in our mastery of all this technology.

Everything was happening in super quick time! By 4 April parishioners were receiving either a text message or an email with important updated information from Fr Tony and the LT and just prior to Easter the first hand deliveries occurred.

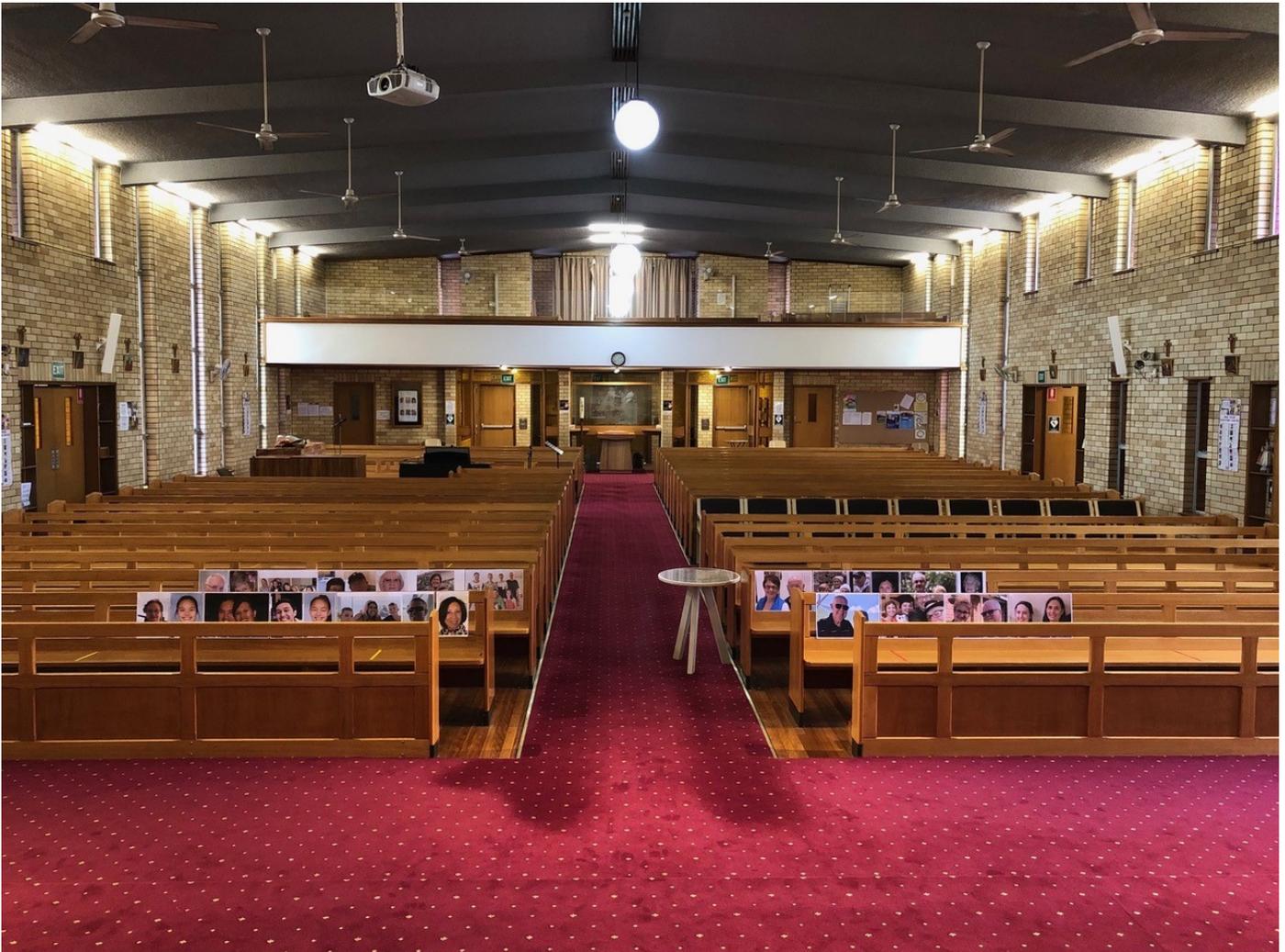
Since Easter, members of the LT and other parishioners have been engaged in a parish “call centre” making regular phone contact with identified parishioners to see how they are managing and asking if they require any assistance. This has been a vital form of communication with some of the vulnerable in our community who may be isolated or very worried by the new restrictions on their freedom and the risks to their health and safety. They are really appreciating this contact from other parishioners.

From his initial communication with parishioners, Fr Tony has encouraged us all to send prayer requests to the Parish. After Easter, a Parish Intercessory Prayer Group of nine faithful people was formed to pray for the needs forwarded by members of our community. By the end of May, 60 requests for prayers have been received so our dedicated group has been very busy indeed! It is wonderful encouragement for them when they receive good news and can also give thanks to God when those prayers are answered.

Meanwhile Clarissa has continued making changes to the pages of the Parish website to keep it current and easy to follow for parishioners. Children’s Liturgy contributions from Marissa de Marcellis are included as well as a range of other spiritual resources developed for adults and children. The Parish office has been a hive of activity making packs for delivery by a team of people to parishioners without online connection.

These challenging times are evidence of the multifaceted team effort that is in place within our parish of amazing volunteers. One of the many things we have and are continuing to learn through this experience is the importance of all parishioners providing the Parish Office with accurate contact details. So, if you are a parishioner, whether you are a contributor to the planned giving or not, it is important to update your details with our dedicated Parish Secretary, Clarissa.

Jenni Payne



Some of our "virtual" congregation

And a word from Craig....

Craig Moran is one of the team who volunteered to contact parishioners who do not use email or social media. His comments below reflect how valuable our parish family is.

I enjoyed all the conversations I had and especially my connection with Shirley Hennessy who was very grateful for the phone calls and always expressed her regret at not being able to go to Mass as well as not being able to have communion at home from one of the Eucharistic ministers. I picked her up for the first Mass back; you could see it was a huge highlight and it was great to see her so happy.

One thing I took away from these calls was seeing and realizing how important that their faith is to these "isolated" people, and what being able to attend Mass means to them. It has motivated me to look at becoming a Eucharistic Minister myself so that I can take communion to people who are sick or elderly and cannot always get to Mass.

I am very impressed with how Father Tony and the Leadership Team, especially Deb Cummins, have managed the whole shebang and to Clarissa in the OLF Parish Office.

Hopefully we will not have to face this kind of (Covid-19) crisis again, but it also emphasizes how important it is to have email addresses and telephone contacts on file for our parishioners.

AFTER THE FIRES: LENDING A HAND TO THE COMMUNITY OF KIAH



Burnt-out water tanks and side of RFS Shed in Kiah

Earlier this year we were confronted with media reports of the devastation caused by bush fires. We heard heartbreaking stories of loss of life, burnt-out homes, businesses and buildings destroyed coupled with the loss of farm stock and the destruction of wildlife.

The south coast of New South Wales saw the mass evacuation of Christmas holidaymakers. Although this was considered a hard call at the time it was a very good decision for the safety of all concerned. However, this resulted in financial hardship for businesses that were reliant on that income from summer holiday visitors.

Amongst the daily media reports of destruction one particular story became of interest to us. A radio story told of the destruction of three large water tanks that were important to the community of Kiah, a village located 14 kilometres south of Eden. Emma Williams, who was listening to the radio at the time, made contact with the Local Member for that area to seek a contact name for us to investigate further.

I followed up and spoke to Theresa McGovern, a local identity who had lost her home in the fire. Her father is Captain of the Kiah RFS Brigade. At the time of my call Theresa was getting ready to bath her 18-month old twin boys in a tub out in the open. I heard an emotional and frightening story of what they had experienced during the fires. I did notice the spirit of resilience and hope that was evident during her sharing.

My next contact was with Iain Stroud who is District Co-ordinator for Bega Valley RFS. He told me about the wonderful rural community of Kiah. During the fire they had lost 42 houses and 98 outbuildings plus livestock. In the centre of the village was an old church and hall; both were lost to the fire. The next building in line was the RFS shed which included toilets plus shower facilities. One side of this building was damaged plus they lost the two water tanks that were attached. A further water tank for the hall was also destroyed in the fire.

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Iain Stroud, Theresa McGovern and twins with one of the new tanks donated by OLF Peakhurst

We sourced the purchase of three replacement water tanks through suppliers in Canberra. We were able to get a very good deal with 3 x 22,500 litre Poly- style tanks which included delivery.

The Lending a Hand committee thought it only appropriate to partly fill each tank with 13,000 litres of water. No doubt God will fill the rest for them. The cost of the tanks was 3x \$2500 = \$7500 plus \$660 for water.

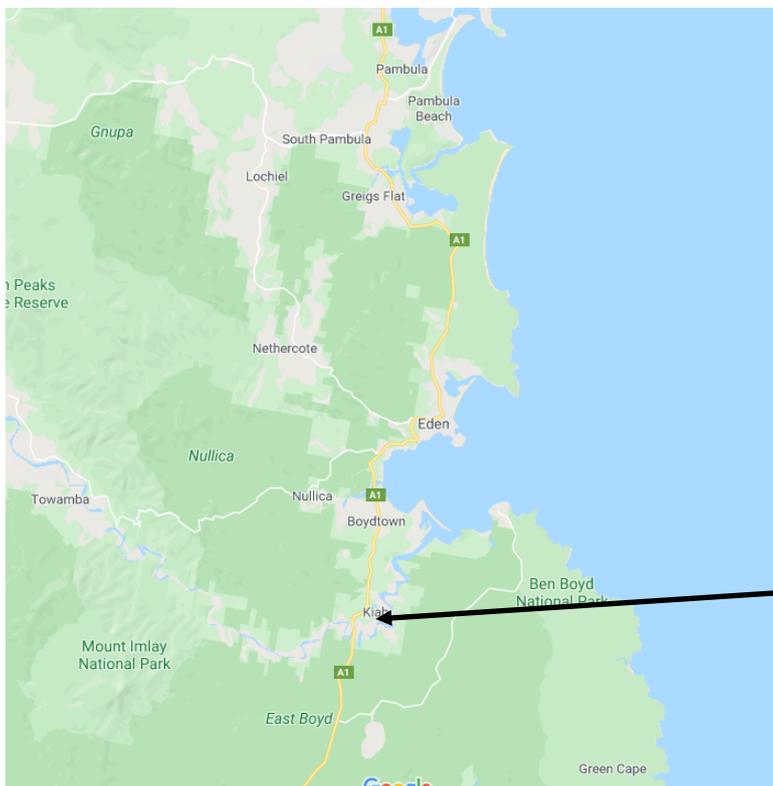
I have maintained regular contact with Iain Stroud who is responsible for 25 Brigades in his area. The responsibility he had during the height of the fires was enormous. He was so caring about the safety of his teams. He mentioned that at the time of writing a number of people are still living in tents, some in caravans and a number in converted shipping containers. During the past week they experienced their first frost. Iain said the RFS building is the meeting point in town. The toilet and shower facilities are a vital part of their infrastructure.

The recovery stage for the community of Kiah is progressing slowly. The remains of the hall and church have been cleared. In due course they will install a fire proof shield to protect the tanks from any further fires.

From my conversations with those involved it's difficult to express adequately how much our support has done for the Kiah community. They are so appreciative of what our church community has provided to help in their recovery.

The Lending a Hand team are considering a visit there at some stage.

Paul Napier, Lending a Hand



OUR LITURGY IN THIS TIME OF COVID-19

Everything seemed to be going so well. It was the first week of Lent. Our main theme for Lent was *BE OPEN* and we had determined the phrases to link to this theme for each Sunday of Lent. 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*. Fr. Tony referred to this theme in his homily; little did we know what lay ahead.

Also, our planning for the Holy Week and Easter Ceremonies was well advanced. The draft booklets and commentaries were prepared, the music was selected, the choir was practising, etc. On 5 March a meeting was held with Fr. Tony and Deacon Cameron to finalise our plans. Everything looked promising, although we were left wondering what form the Adoration of the Cross on Good Friday (10 April) would take at this time.

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 coronavirus (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. A meeting of Fr. Tony, the Leadership Team and some of the Ministry Leaders was held on 17 March and the outcomes of this meeting were advised to parishioners in the bulletin the following weekend. 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 requirements). Thanks to a lot of effort, these Masses went very well. Particular thanks to Peter Esho who, from this time, became our chief "videographer" for the live streaming of our Masses. Over 300 parishioners attended the three weekend Masses.

By Monday, 23 March, strict guidelines were in force for the Coronavirus 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.

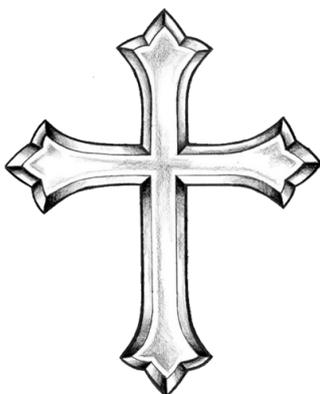
For the Holy Week Ceremonies, additional ministers (acolyte, readers and musicians) were allowed to assist at Masses. The Vatican and the Archdiocese provided instructions as to how the liturgies might be celebrated, taking into account the significant restrictions due to the Coronavirus emergency.

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Certain simplifications to the rites were permitted. For Palm Sunday, the Mass began with a Simple Entrance. For Holy Thursday, the Washing of Feet and the procession to the Altar of Repose were omitted. For Good Friday, only the priest was allowed to venerate the cross by kissing it. In the Solemn Intercessions, there was a special intention for “those who find themselves in distress, the sick, and the dead from the COVID-19 virus”. For the Easter Vigil, the preparation and blessing of the fire, the procession, the Litany, the Blessing of the Font and the Blessing of Baptismal Water were all omitted. The Stations of the Cross on Good Friday morning were beautiful. Prior to the Easter Vigil, Fr. Tony blessed our new incense thurible and boat. In spite of everything, the Holy Week Ceremonies went very well. Our thanks to everyone involved, particularly Fr. Tony and Deacon Cameron, whose chanting was just lovely. 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. The flowers and wreath arranged by the Altar Society were beautiful. Our new banner reading *Lest We Forget* was on the front wall.

May is the Month of Mary and on Mother’s Day, 10 May, we had our statue of Our Lady of Fatima on the lower sanctuary surrounded by flowers and our Parish banner on the front wall. 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.



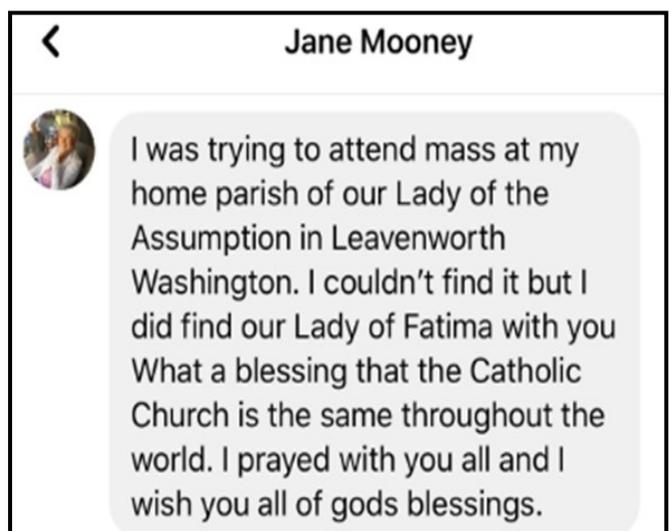
On Wednesday, 13 May, the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima was celebrated with a special Mass at 9.30am. Fr. Tony also arranged Rosary with music on the night which was live streamed.

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 Monday, 1 June, we will be allowed 50 “worshippers” to attend Mass and hopefully soon a lot more!

We are thankful to Fr. Tony who has ministered to us in such a wonderful way during this very difficult time; to Deacon Cameron – we were so fortunate that he was with us; to Clarissa, our dedicated Parish Secretary and also to our Parish Leadership Team which has “led from the front”. Lastly, our thanks to the many parishioners who have helped with our liturgies at this time—musicians, readers, “videographers”, acolytes, ushers, cleaners, the Altar Society and others - you have been amazing!

David Payne, Liturgy Committee

The Parish also owes our heartfelt thanks also to our committed and creative Liturgy Committee! Ed.



This message on the parish Facebook page is wonderful testament from a distant land!

Introducing Ravilya Sedlar...

Our livestreamed Masses have been a lifeline for many parishioners and the music has lifted our spirits. Meet one of our dedicated musicians . . .

From the moment I walked into Our Lady of Fatima Peakhurst, I instantly felt the Holy Spirit reassuring me that this church was a special place to come to worship God. From that day forward, I have been coming to Mass at OLF.

When I was a young 16 year-old pianist, I was approached by Fr Frank Coorey (past Parish Priest of St Francis Xavier, Ashbury) to start playing the piano at church to lead the congregation in music for Sunday Masses. Fr Frank's belief in me and gentle encouragement to worship God through music has led me to be involved in assisting with music in churches ever since.

When I came to OLF I was so happy to see varied groups of singers and musicians who assist so willingly every week to provide music for our Masses. Of course I wanted to join them straight away. The passion I have towards music was always something I wanted to share and I feel very blessed to be given the opportunity to praise God by playing and singing music at OLF.

What an interesting experience it has been to be involved in the music ministry for a virtual worshipping congregation during COVID-19. It felt surreal to be singing and playing music to an empty church.



The thing that kept me going was knowing that behind the live streaming video was the community of OLF tuning into Masses to pray together at such a challenging time.

One of the things which has always encouraged me to continue in the music ministry is hearing the congregation singing at Mass. I can't wait to be part of an "OLF live" singing congregation again when we are all able to come back to church.

I truly believe that the voice of the church is not the sound of all the good voices singing, but the sound of every voice in the congregation singing to praise God.

I encourage you to think about being involved in the music and singing at Saturday and Sunday Masses whether as the voice of OLF in the congregation or taking a big step in leading the congregation as a singer or musician at Mass.

I am looking forward to hearing the voice of OLF together in song at our next Mass.

THE MAN BEHIND THE CAMERA (AND THE FAMILY BEHIND THE MAN)

Peter Esho has been instrumental in bringing the live-streamed Masses to parishioners through his expertise and commitment.

I was born and baptised in the Assyrian Church of the East but in 2005 our family decided to join the Chaldean Rite of the Catholic Church. This followed the Common Christological Declaration made between Rome and the Assyrian Church back in 1996.

My uncle, Bishop Soro, led the conversion of many Assyrians into the Catholic Church. He completed his PhD in Rome and is today the Chaldean Catholic Bishop of Canada. My wife, Christine was born and baptised into the Syriac Catholic rite. We were married into the Chaldean Church in 2010 and our children have all been baptised in the Maronite rite.

I studied at Freeman College where Tony MacDougal was my Assistant Principal. I then studied business and finance at the University of Sydney and University of New South Wales. I worked in business, finance and investments across Asia. I'm also occasionally on television where I chat about business and finance topics. Christine has a Health Science background.

Christine and I are blessed with three children - Sophia, Chris and Vivianne - who all attend Lugarno Public School. We chose to attend OLF Peakhurst because we live in Lugarno and this is the closest Catholic Church to our home.

While we are very busy with our family and professional lives, our faith comes first. I'm currently working on several lay apostolate projects outside of the parish.

I think digital media is a great way to evangelise to the modern world, reaching people in their homes and on their devices. I'm not really trained in this area but given my media experience, I think it's definitely an effective way for us to build community and this has been brought forward by the pandemic.



Music on the Move

Cast your mind back to last year's music trial and survey where we had 12 weeks of trialling different ways of enhancing the Mass with music, followed by a survey in December. This allowed us to capture your feedback for decision-making on how the music ministry would move forward in 2020. There were 345 surveys completed – a wonderful response! This has provided us with some great information, so thank you for your contribution!

The survey results and all the comments from the survey were compiled and presented to the OLF Leadership Team in February (their first meeting of the year) together with the Music Ministry recommendations and feedback from the trial. Statistics were presented exactly as per the initial survey in addition to being presented by age group and Mass group to provide the Leadership Team with a variety of information for additional planning purposes. Some samples of these statistics and graphs can be seen on the following page.

Our hard-working Leadership Team had a huge amount of information and data to digest and after a couple of meetings they decided a special meeting needed to be held to discuss the results in more detail and make some decisions. Unfortunately, as fate would have it, the meeting was held on the eve of the COVID-19 gathering restrictions taking place! On a positive note though, some decisions were able to be made with more Leadership Team discussions to be had once things get back to “normal”.

Confirmed changes:

The Kyrie and Gloria will be sung at all Masses

Musical notation and lyrics will be projected for Mass parts *except the Gloria and the Sanctus (Holy, Holy)*.

Lyrics only will be displayed for the Gloria and Sanctus (due to their length, number of slides required and difficulty for projectionists and congregation to follow)

Mass settings (i.e. melodies for the Mass parts) will be changed every three months. The exception to this will be when the OLF choir prepare harmonised Mass settings for special Masses (Christmas, Easter etc.) when lyrics only will be displayed.

One new hymn to be introduced approximately every two months. Lyrics only to be displayed with *NO* musical notation. Strategies for the introduction of new hymns; an instrumental version played before Mass and/or at the Offertory for melody familiarisation.

There will be *NO* reflection hymn at all Masses on the 2nd and 4th weekend of the month. This will allow for silent reflection time.

The Music Ministry will endeavour to put these changes in place as soon as possible once restrictions are lifted, although the introduction of new hymns may take a few more weeks to allow for music ministry rehearsals. Of course, there have been no rehearsals during the pandemic period.

In addition, the new sound system was installed just before the announcement of the gathering restrictions, so only a few ministry members have been able to trial it so far! We have new microphones and stands, speakers and a new mixer which has certainly provided an improvement of the overall sound quality in the church.

There are plenty of things to look forward to upon our return to “normality”. We look forward to providing you with a meaningful liturgical experience once we can be together in our parish again. In the interim, keep safe and well.

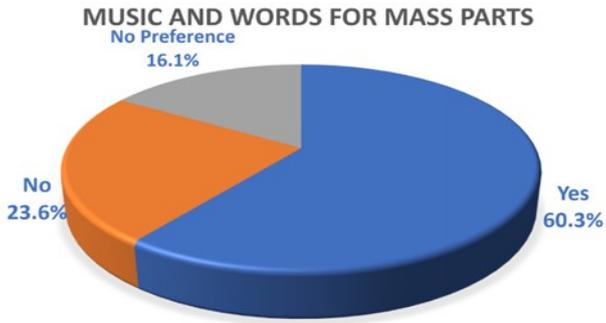
Susie Paino, Music Ministry

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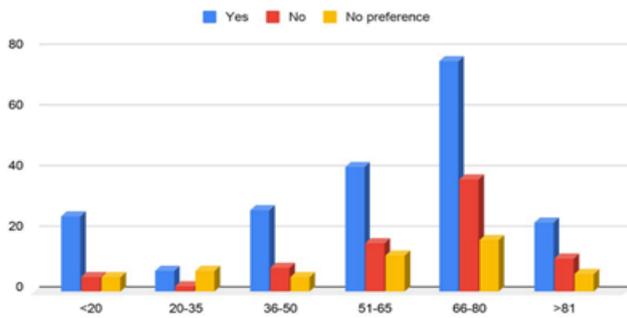
SAMPLE ONE:

MUSIC AND WORDS FOR MASS PARTS

1) Data as per survey results



Music & Words for Mass Parts



3) Same data sorted by Mass group

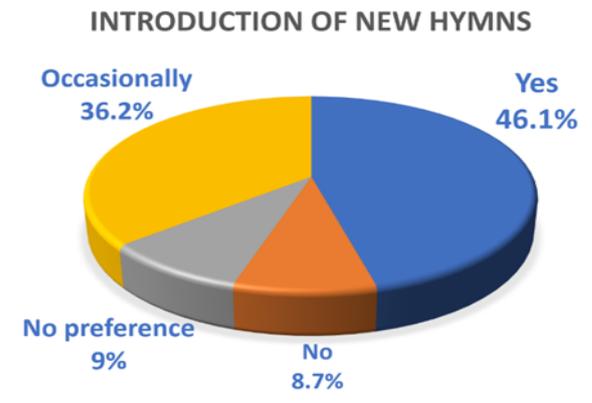
Music & Words for Mass Parts by Mass Group



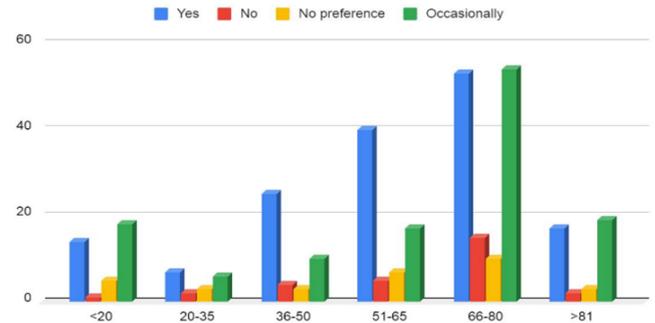
SAMPLE TWO:

INTRODUCTION OF NEW HYMNS

1) Data as per survey results



New Hymns by Age Group

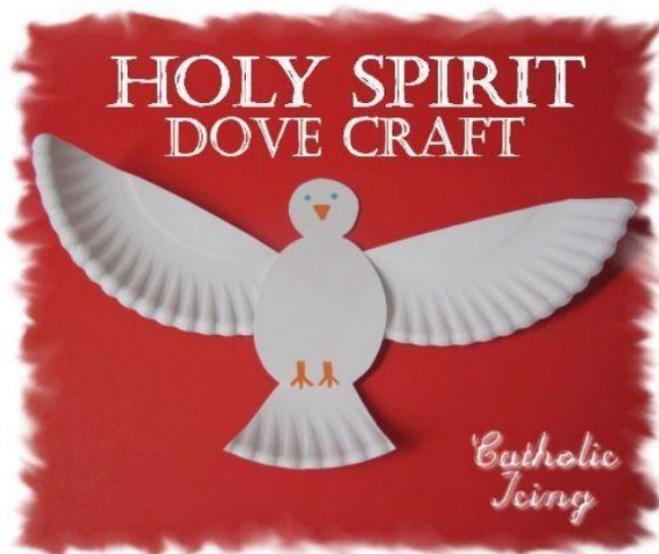


3) Same data sorted by Mass group

New Hymns by Mass Group



Children's Liturgy – at a distance



COVID-19 forced all of us to make dramatic changes in every aspect of our lives in the space of what felt like overnight, and in reality took just a few weeks. Entire countries were shut down, and for the first time in my lifetime, my own neighbourhood, household, and small family unit was a part of a global pandemic that shut down schools, workplaces, shopping centres, churches; in short, our way of life.

I was so surprised at how quickly my own family unit adapted to this change. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't a smooth ride! I had to juggle working from home while opening up a home schooling institution that catered for Kindergarten to Year 11! Mayhem to say the least! But it appears that in times of crisis, we humans are very adaptable and connect even more strongly to our surroundings.

It seems that on every level, we are all learning valuable lessons in resilience and human adaptability. Having churches shut did not pose a problem at our ever-adapting OLF Parish as the opportunity to bring Mass to each and everyone of us in our own homes became a reality.

Being able to still 'attend' Mass during the lockdown was a very special thing. It gave our family 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 are invited to download from the parish website or via the link on our parish Facebook page. Each week, I also put up a craft idea relating to either the readings for that week or the Gospel.

Xavier and Joshua have loved doing the crosswords and other worksheets each week, and they feel a bit more a part of the home Mass experience as it presents in their language and engages them at their levels. It also gives the rest of us at home the chance to really listen to Fr Tony and our other wonderful Priests and readers as, for a while, the kids are kept busy!

I hope the families of OLF have found the worksheets and activities beneficial and they have perhaps helped them to be able to have the time to sit with Fr Tony each week and enjoy Mass from their own home, while the children are at their very own Home Sunday School. I look forward to the time when we can recommence the Sunday School program at OLF, but until then I will continue to upload worksheets each week as a small way to keep in touch with the many wonderful children of our parish.

Marissa De Marcellis, Children's Liturgy

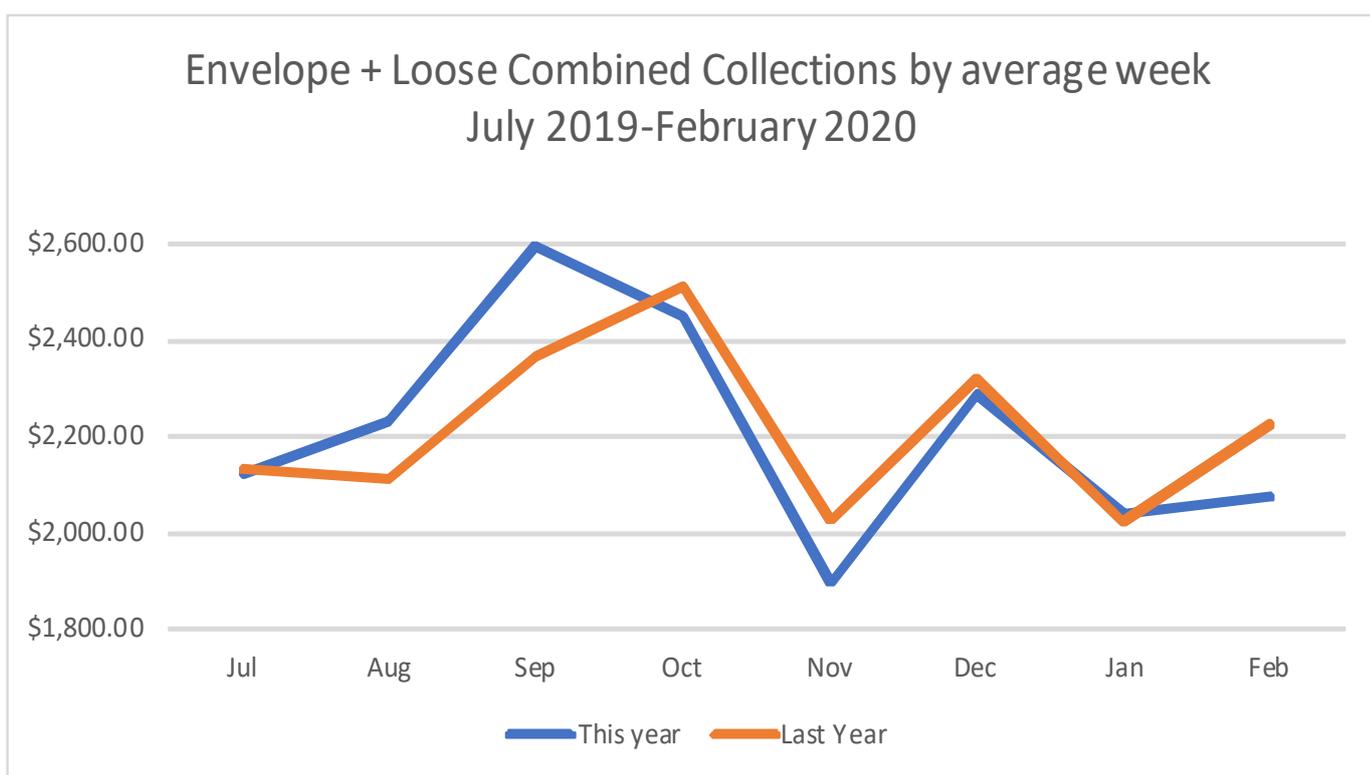
Parish income and the impact of Covid-19

Financial resources are important for what any organisation is attempting to achieve. At OLF Peakhurst, our primary source of income is from parishioners' weekly and monthly contributions.

With the recent restrictions caused by the Coronavirus our income has been significantly impacted. For individuals who have either lost employment, or had hours reduced, it is obviously a challenge. Likewise, those parishioners who normally contribute cash via envelopes or loose money have found it difficult to hand in their weekly donations.

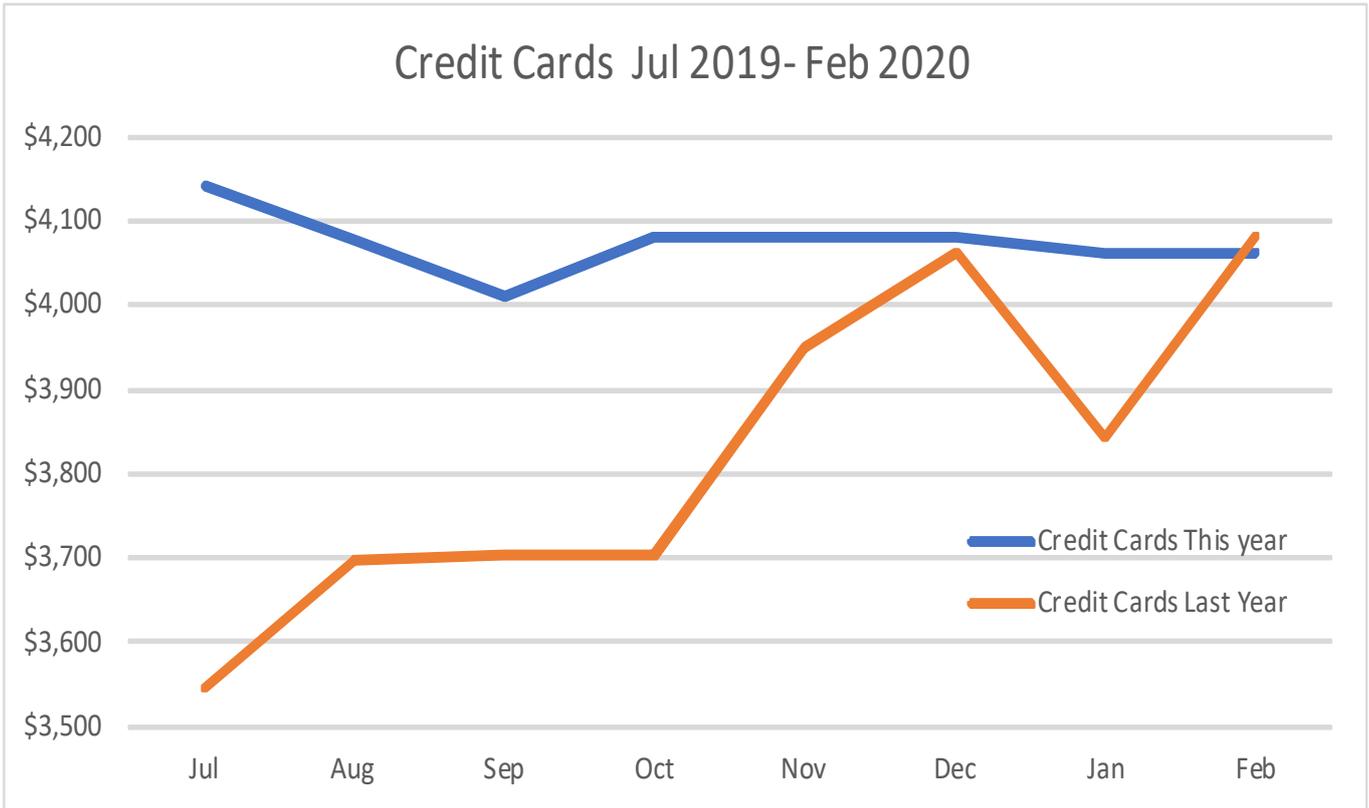
Some parishioners have been able to drop in donations to the parish office, or when attending recent Masses, and contributions from those who give via the ongoing, monthly, planned-giving process have continued as normal. We are also receiving funding from the Jobkeeper program and from an additional government "cash flow" grant. These all combine to hopefully cushion the loss of revenue to possibly 35% of normal income.

Looking at the period July to February (prior to the virus shut-down) collections started off well compared to last year, but unfortunately fell away as the year progressed. Despite budgeting for an increase in line with cost of living, total collections have declined in the latter months before the lock-down compared to last year as seen in the following chart. The blue line (this year) is equal to or higher than last year in the first quarter, but falls in October through to February.



As can be seen from the above chart, the analysis of envelope and loose money contributions, while providing a trend, is very difficult to interpret, due to significant fluctuations in the weekly amounts. By comparison, income from parishioners who are in the ongoing monthly credit card process is relatively consistent (see chart on the next page). The fluctuations in that chart for last year are the result of parishioners transferring to the monthly credit card process progressively during the period.

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Responding to requests from a number of parishioners, a process was introduced in early May to enable parishioners, particularly those who normally contribute via cash in envelopes or loose money, to donate during the lock-down using a new application on the parish website. While providing a continuing opportunity to donate to planned giving, this process will be expanded in future months to allow donations of other types to the parish. This option only allows single donations, and so a separate entry is required for each donation.

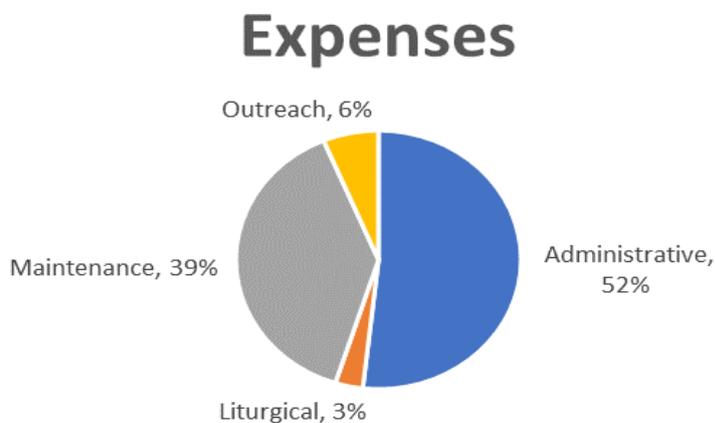
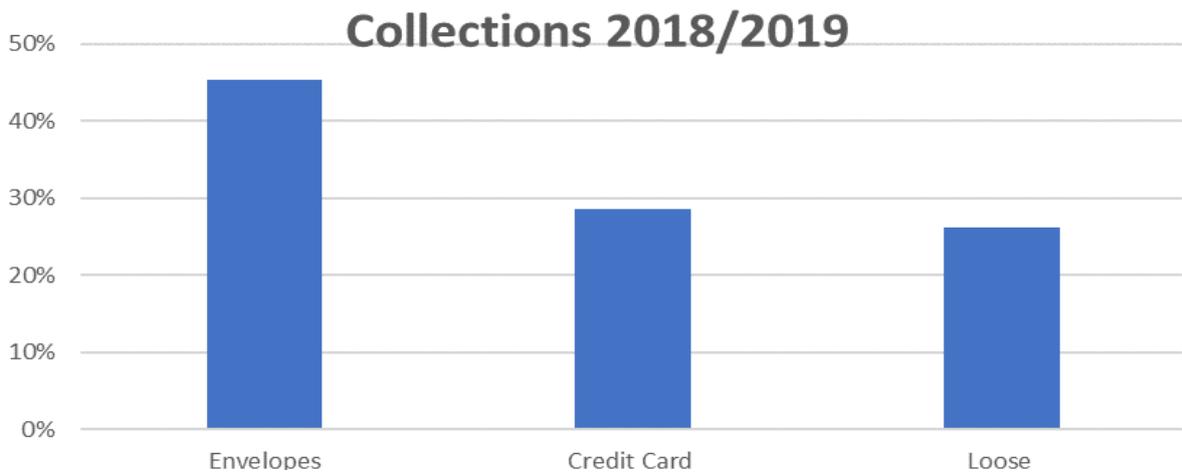
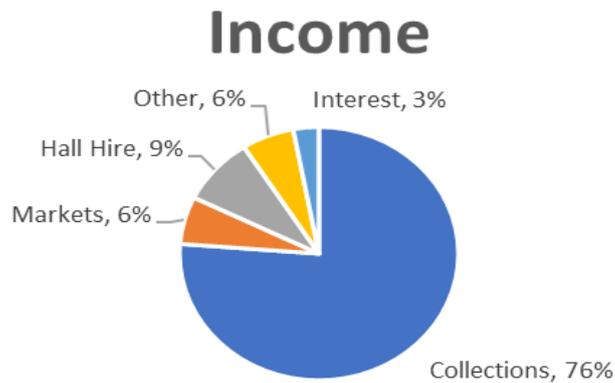
Since the restrictions imposed by Coronavirus, there has been a number of parishioners choosing to join the existing, ongoing, monthly planned giving process, and there are now 73 parishioners contributing this way. As this trend continues it is likely to be the largest method of parishioner contributions in the very near future. The ongoing monthly planned-giving process offers advantages to both the contributor and the parish, in that it is more efficient and is increasingly a preferred method of payment in an era that is moving away from cash. Currently parishioners contributing this way receive slips that they use in the weekly Mass collections, recognising their status as a monthly planned giving contributor. Additional security is in place to ensure parishioners' details are secure and credit card payments are processed using an existing Commonwealth Bank process.

As things progressively move back to normal and we are able to return to regular Sunday Masses, you are encouraged to consider moving to this method of contributing, which you can do so by simply accessing and completing the form located on the parish website, at the entrances to the church, or by contacting the parish office.

Tony Thorpe, Finance Committee

Parish Financials 2018/2019

The major source of parish income comes from you, the parishioner (76% in 2018/2019). However, in the past few years income has been bolstered from rental of the parish hall and the operation of the markets on the parish grounds. Additionally, income from the monthly markets drink stall, manned by a small number of dedicated parishioners, with all drinks donated by Club Rivers, has added significantly to our income. Maintenance costs in 2018/2019 included some significant costs for renovations, apart from regular maintenance. The surplus for 2018/2019 was \$3,612.



Covid-19 – finding the positives!

I'm sure that for most families 2020 will be a year we will never forget! I know that for Lisa, our four children and I, it certainly has impacted us in many ways. Not all of it is negative!

Back around 20 March, Lisa and I were celebrating our 27th Wedding anniversary and spent four days away at Salt Resort, Kingscliff. Although, back then restaurants, cafes and bars had started to introduce some restrictions around head count etc, we still didn't fully comprehend the impact COVID-19 was going to have on our family, let alone the world.

Before our weekend away, I was involved with the COVID-19 response through my work with Qantas on catering relief flights on behalf of the government to repatriate Australians stuck in China and Japan. At that time, I must admit, I did not fully understand the gravity of what was coming. I thought COVID-19 was limited to areas of China and a few other cities and countries close by. Wasn't I horribly mistaken?!

As the virus continued to spread globally, the government started to close our borders to all but Australian citizens, therefore our international operations all but ceased in a matter of weeks. Soon after, our domestic operations followed. I was stunned at the speed at which it hit.

I was one of the 20,000 or so Qantas staff who were stood down from early April. So, after 30+ years working at Qantas, I suddenly found myself with lots of spare time!

Fortunately, Lisa was still working. Luke, Rachel, Pat and Kate were all also impacted with being stood down from their full- and part-time jobs. However, we quickly realised our family's "safety net" meant we had food and a roof over our heads.

The first thing Lisa and I did was to go through our expenses and see where we could potentially save a few bucks. We were able to save quite a bit, without sacrificing too much. With no other major expenses or debt, we were financially in a pretty good position. The second thing I did was make a list of everything I wanted to do around the house; jobs that I had been



putting off for years like sanding, painting, staining, cleaning outdoor areas, and re-sealing tiles etc. So far, each week I have been able to finish a job from our list.

The biggest impact from all of this was how it happily forced us all closer together. Not that we are not a close family by choice, but like most families these days, we are all time poor. It would be rare for us all to sit down for a meal together outside of birthdays, Christmas, Easter etc.

This all changed once lock down started. We have had some great nights together; the highlight for me has been cocktails and cards nights. Our preference is Euchre, especially teaching Rachel and Kate how to play and now they are hooked. Another popular card game for us is "Signal", making up sly signals to discreetly tip your partner off and not get caught by the others; this gave us plenty of laughs! Our duty-free stash has also taken a hit - I need to get back to work so I can replenish it!

The mild autumn weather has allowed me and my son Pat to have a few rounds of golf each week at Royal Hurstville taking advantage of their 3pm/\$13 special. This has been a real highlight for me, as previously we have both struggled to find time to have a hit together.

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Another positive has been the number of families out and about walking dogs, riding bikes, jogging etc. Some afternoons, if the sun was out, we would sit out the front of our house with our labradoodle Frankie and enjoy the passing crowd of locals walking past our home. The only other time we ever sat out the front was Christmas Eve!

Taking the time to plan and cook some nice meals together especially with Rachel and Kate, has been great, as well as the many visits to the dog park, and discovering new walks with Lisa around Sans Souci, Ramsgate, Oatley and Blakehurst.

I have been able to do some volunteer work in the city, helping to cook and pack meals for workers from the hospitality field who have found themselves out of a job. They are not entitled to any government support as they are not Australian citizens and cannot travel back home due to the travel bans in place.

In the scheme of things, we have been blessed with no real serious long-term impact to our lives, unlike many other people here and overseas, who have faced serious financial and emotional hardship and in some cases loss of life.

This pandemic has forced us to stop, think and appreciate this amazing country and how lucky we are to live where we live. Hopefully before this year is out, I can get back to work and our lives can return to as near normal as possible.

We will, however, be taking many positive experiences of these last few months with us into 2021 and beyond.

Richard Allison

Let's make lockdown REALLY interesting

Just what we needed; an additional challenge during lockdown! Emma Williams had a vision several months ago and that was to renovate our house so that I had a granny flat within the main building. She convinced us all that it would be a wonderful idea. We had no idea that Covid 19 loomed on the horizon. Thinking that the lockdown would be over within a short period, we decided to go ahead with the renovation. The girls were home from school and uni, Brett worked from home and I was a retiree. Oh boy, did we get on each other's nerves! Even the cat was nervous. We were confined to a small section of the house each day and when the workers had gone, we had the job of cleaning up the mess. Somehow we were up for the challenge, still love each other and the house looks wonderful.

Catherine Matthews



#georgesrivereats – a lifeline for local businesses

One of the many inspirational stories that has come out of Covid-19 is the amazing success of a Facebook group established early in the lockdown period to support local restaurants and cafes. It has become much more, as its creator, Adla Coure, recounts below.



#georgesrivereats, is a really simple concept: local cafes and restaurants post their take-away offerings, special deals and hours of operation, and locals post pictures of their take away or cook-at-home meals purchased from local businesses.

The only rule that exists is that no negative comments are to be posted. Complaints can be taken up with the business in question. Given that I was trying to promote small business, it seemed best to keep it to this approach. I also said that, as administrator of the group, I would remove any posts of that nature and potentially block users who were not able to follow the rules. Surprisingly the group has remained incredibly positive and supportive. I can only think of less than a handful of posts I've had to delete. Locals have really embraced the Facebook group and it really has become part of the community.

There are currently 2422 members, with some local parishioners posting delicious meals! I have broadened the scope for posts that appear on the group page. Essentially local shops whose main business is food - such as butchers, fruit shops, or caterers, chefs, bakers and shops that sell cookware etc can post. It's actually broadened the business offerings and it also allows people who may not be in a financial position to purchase take away to be included because they're able to take a photo of something they've bought that's readymade or something they've made from ingredients purchased locally. I've found this has been popular. I thought it would allow anyone who has lost a job, is on a fixed income, or who has specific dietary requirements, to also contribute to this movement of supporting small business.

I never imagined that **#georgesrivereats** would become so popular. I have been so gratified by some really heartfelt messages from local business owners who have said that without the community support generated from this group, their business would not have survived. That's incredibly humbling. I have also received messages from members of the group asking me what will happen to the group once businesses reopen. My answer is that **#georgesrivereats** began as a place to help small business survive. It's now become a community that has allowed many people a place to share a love of food with others all in isolation. Friendships have been made and there's no way I would end it. If anything, it will always be there for people to look back on, to see just how wonderful the community dotted along the Georges River was during the time of Covid-19. As someone whose parents were hard-working small business owners, I'm so incredibly proud to have been able to help small businesses in our local area. It's a privilege to be able to bring people together for a virtual dinner party each evening.

Long Service Leave in the shadow of COVID-19



At the end of 2018, after counselling a number of staff members who had accrued significant Long Service Leave (LSL) to take their entitlements, I decided that I would take my own advice and apply to use my own not-too-insignificant LSL entitlements in 2020. I had been a principal in a secondary school for seven years, the last three of those managing a substantial building program which had gone overtime and was due for completion near the end of 2019. I had put this leave on hold for a number of years making all sorts of excuses for not taking it. So I made a commitment to myself that Terms 2 - 4 of 2020 would be it.

When the leave was approved I didn't have any real plans; it was all about rest, restoration, reflection, renewal and hopefully resetting my life in preparation for the few years before I retired.

Family, friends and work colleagues, who know me well, know that "freestyling" doesn't come naturally to me, so they were a little concerned: "So, what will you do with yourself?" + "How will you cope?" "Won't you get bored?"

As it turned out, this period of "freestyling" was short lived as plans quickly took shape for 2020. A friend and principal colleague asked me to join her on a five-week study tour of the USA during Term 2. We would combine visits to schools in New York, Boston, Napa Valley and San Francisco with some sightseeing. We had booked all of our airfares, accommodation and some amazing cultural experiences including Broadway shows, a tour of Harvard University and a Boston Red Sox game at Fenway Park. We were pretty excited!

My husband, Chris, was able to accrue enough leave to join me for Terms 3 and 4 so we began planning our travel adventures. We would begin with a ten-day holiday to the Maldives at the end of June, take a leisurely road trip to South Australia to visit our son and spend the remainder of Term 3 preparing our house for sale by the end of 2020.

We then cobbled together a European adventure for late September to early November. Well, cobbled together is really an understatement because Chris and I are serial "over planners". We had booked flights, accommodation and car hire for a driving holiday through the south-west of England. We would then fly to Portugal and spend some time in Lisbon and Porto before commencing the Portuguese Camino. Our goal was to celebrate Chris' 60th Birthday in Santiago de Compostela, Spain on October 31 before flying home.



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All of these plans suddenly went belly up with the outbreak of the Coronavirus and the subsequent closure of all regional, state and international borders. While we initially resisted cancelling our travel plans, in the vain hope that things would improve, in the end the decisions were taken out of our hands. While we were disappointed at the time, in hindsight, looking at the world statistics on the spread of the Coronavirus, particularly in the three countries we were going to visit, the US, UK and Spain, I think that we dodged a bullet (or even a container load of respirators).

I did contemplate cancelling my LSL like many of my other colleagues, but by that stage I had already been replaced as principal. Many colleagues offered sympathy assuming that my LSL would now be wasted. The questions about what I was going to do with myself given the lockdown and restrictions intensified but I reminded them, and myself, of the original purpose of the leave - personal and professional renewal. After 35 years as an educator, 30 years of that in various leadership roles, my life has been ruled by the structure created by syllabuses, programs, timetables, calendars, bells and meetings, so what I needed was some genuine freestyling and trying, what I later discovered, was a journey towards “slow living”.

It wasn't hard given the initial restrictions created by COVID-19, although there were a few occasions when I lapsed back to my old ways and madly cleaned every cupboard in sight only to be reminded by my husband that it was only Easter and with at least 30 weeks of leave ahead of me I perhaps should not peak too early!

My journey towards slow living began officially on Monday April 27 - Day 1 Term 2 - when I unsubscribed from my work calendars, created an “Out of Office” message for my work email, moved my corporate wardrobe (including heels) into one of the spare rooms replacing it with exercise and leisure gear. I also made a commitment to daily walks and other exercise, paying more attention to my physical and mental health, quality sleep, reading, time in the garden and, most importantly, to be more present to my family.

Before long, I noticed I felt a lot calmer, more mindful, healthier and happier in myself. I did some research into the philosophy of slow living and found out that it “is conscious, intentional, mindful, and living deeply...It is about taking the time to do things properly, and thereby enjoying them more. It's about nourishing and savouring the minutes instead of counting them”. (www.sloww.co/slow-living)



So, five weeks in, here are my (random) reflections about my attempt at slow living during my LSL. I hope that as the weeks continue I will be able to add more to this list.

- ♥ It's okay when your Google calendar reminds you that there are no upcoming events for the next day, or even for the next week
- ♥ Breakfast definitely tastes better at 8.00am rather than 5.30am.
- ♥ I never realised how many sections *The Sydney Morning Herald* has.
- ♥ Walking is much more enjoyable (and safer) when you aren't multi-tasking by fielding work calls on your mobile while you are trying to squeeze in your 30 minutes of exercise in the dark. You can be more mindful and appreciate the sights and sounds of nature.
- ♥ I can now watch more foreign films on television, read the subtitles and follow the plot because I don't have to multitask my viewing with doing work on my laptop.
- ♥ Dinner tastes better when it is savoured at the dinner table in the company of people you love rather than gobbled down in front of television.
- ♥ Food should nourish not only our bodies but also our hearts and our souls.
- ♥ Growing vegetables and herbs from seed teaches us something about life and living.
- ♥ It's about doing less, but doing those things better
- ♥ Don't underestimate the value of connecting with and being truly present to your family and friends instead of scheduling them into your "busy" day.

The last couple of months have also been a spiritual challenge because the routine of attending Sunday Mass and celebrating with our community and friends hasn't been possible; but I think I'm exploring a different spirituality, because I have had to slow down, be present and listen. I've gained a greater appreciation for the story of Martha and Mary. I don't think that Jesus rejects the "Martha" in us, but the gospel story certainly encourages us to find our inner Mary and spend time with God without being busy and distracted and being open to possibilities, potentials and moments that aren't planned and calendared.

Paula Bounds



Photographs of the varied scenery from Paula's daily walks

ST VINCENT DE PAUL COVID-19 UPDATE

Since the COVID-19 lockdown commenced in March, for the first time in 52 years our Peakhurst Vinnies members have not been able to meet with our clients face-to-face.

As most of our members are in the COVID-19 high-risk age group, we have been restricted to 'drop and run' visits where we interview the clients by telephone, assess their needs and arrange to deliver food parcels and food vouchers to the front gate or foyer door for apartments, observing from a safe distance to ensure they receive the assistance package. Sometimes, where we assess that a client's place of residence is of high risk for delivery and the client is able to travel, we arrange for that client to go to the Hurstville Regional office where they are supplied with an assistance package containing food and vouchers in a "no contact" situation.

Following the introduction of the Government Stimulus Support for our clients we are receiving fewer calls for help. However we expect a dramatic increase in assistance requests once the Centrelink Stimulus payments cease. In addition we are coming into the winter months when traditionally Vinnies experiences greater demand for not only food and vouchers, but many requests for warm clothing, blankets and heaters along with energy accounts assistance and provision of accommodation for the homeless.

This leads us to our Annual Vinnies' Parish Winter Appeal which is a major fundraiser for our Peakhurst Conference. These funds allow our members to continue to carry out the Good Works of St Vincent de Paul in assisting the less fortunate in our community.

Donations can be made through the our website <https://www.ourladyoffatima.com.au/> where there is a link to the Parish Bpoint Secure Payments Service. Please use the Biller Code for "Vinnies Donations". For those parishioners who are either not in a position to use Bpoint or may wish to donate cash, we will make Vinnies Winter Appeal envelopes available in the front foyer of the church. Envelope donations may be placed in the Poor Boxes or left in the Drop Safe located in the front door of the Parish House. For those parishioners wishing to receive a taxation receipt please include your name and address or email address on the envelope. In addition Vinnies will be collecting donations at the Weekly Saturday Foodies Farm Market on 20 June.

May God Bless all our parishioners for your continuing support of Our Lady of Fatima Peakhurst St Vincent de Paul Conference.

Mike Flanagan, President



Foodies Markets: what's new?

With the friendly, community spirit of our popular and often jam-packed Night Markets off the agenda until further notice, it was again time to re-invent.

For some time, we had been speaking to Krisari Markets about the prospect of a Saturday daytime Farmers' Market with the emphasis being on fresh fruit and vegetables. The slight easing of COVID 19 restrictions on May 15 presented us with the perfect opportunity.

Fresh market produce = amazing grazing plate!



So, on a dreary, drizzly Saturday morning the fresh food markets started trading out of the OLF car park. Stalls were mainly on the grassed area with cars directed to safely park in part of the car park. Strict entrance and exit points were adhered to, hand washing stations were provided, sanitisers were at every stall, number limits enforced in stalls and social distancing was strongly encouraged. Overall, it was observed that people were happily complying with the new normal that we all seem to have been easily able to adapt to.

The feedback on the fresh fruit and vegetables was excellent with the local Facebook page, **#georgesrivereats** (set up and administered by our very own Adla Coure), featuring many people happily posting about the food they had prepared using their markets' purchases. I saw some delicious-looking potato and leek soup, vegetable soup and an amazing grazing plate.

Other things on offer include fresh meat and poultry, salami, fresh eggs, vegan desserts, gluten-free donuts, fabulous coffee and a few of our regulars - pho and gozleme.

With the excellent response received about the new markets, it is hoped that they can continue at least until our popular night markets return some time in the future - or perhaps we can have both!

Emma Williams



Dinner is (still) served!

One Meal dinner service at Riverwood has been operating now as an outreach of Lending a Hand for the past two years. We thought we'd had enough time to iron out any problems and things were running along quite smoothly. Then along came Covid-19 and we were forced to re-invent ourselves over and over again. Thanks to the dedication and generosity of all of our volunteers we have continued to operate throughout the crises and have not missed a Monday.

When Covid-19 became more prevalent we took the opportunity to reinforce food handling and hygiene protocols to all our teams. "Please prepare meals as usual but ensure you exercise frequent hand washing, thoroughly clean preparation surfaces and, where possible, wear disposable gloves."

As things started to "heat up" we quickly moved to serving take-away meals. The first group to do this was our team from St Therese Padstow who delivered the meals to the Riverwood Community Centre. A smaller group packed them into take-away containers which were then passed from the kitchen servery so as to minimise person- to-person contact.



Delicious meals packaged and ready to go

All our guests were also given a notice about the changes and information about Covid-19.

Then, things really got turned on their head! As you all know "lock down" started and we were all told to stay at home. We felt that it was really important to try as hard as we could to continue our service, now was as important a time as any. The NSW Government Gazette on March 27 stated "nothing in the clause prevents the use of premises to provide a service to assist vulnerable members of the public, for example food bank or food services." So we adapted again. We were incredibly fortunate that the Riverwood Community Centre was so helpful in supporting us to do this.

As I write this in early May we are now serving outside, handing out meals in a take-away container, supervising social distancing and moving our guests on straight after they are served. They are taking their meal and eating at home. This generally only requires a couple of volunteers attending. We bring a fully sanitised table to serve from as well as gloves and sanitiser. The patrons are aware of and most grateful for the new format. This allows us to continue to offer the service when we feel it is most needed.

As we moved outside, my concern turned to the added pressure on our volunteers in terms of sourcing food from the supermarket when supplies of staples such as pasta and rice were hard to come by and

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also the cost of buying food when volunteers may have job losses. We secured \$150 per week from the One Meal Board to buy food and see us through this period of uncertainty. I then spoke to Mark at Marks @ Oatley and he is providing us with 50 serves of a main meal which he packages in containers supplied by us (paid for by OM). Mark has been incredibly generous to us. Volunteers then make up salad or vegetables and dessert to accompany the main course. We continue to receive cakes and rolls from Lugarno Bakery and fruit from Footsteps Childcare at Beverly Hills.

Finally with daylight saving ending and the colder months setting in, we changed to a new temporary serving time of 5pm.

On a personal note, I have been very humbled by the grace and courage shown by all our volunteers in adopting and adapting to the new arrangements.

Our patrons are very grateful for the food. Most are lonely and really feeling the social isolation of the current situation. The company and the social aspect of One Meal is as vital as the actual dinner we serve. We are looking forward to the day, hopefully not too far away, when we can all sit down to together to eat the meal and really check up on all our guests.

Emma Williams - One Meal/Lending a Hand



The impact of Covid-19 has been felt by us all. However, it has been especially hard for those who are dependent on meal and other services for their daily needs such as the guests of Canice's Kitchen in Elizabeth Bay. Continuing to provide those services, while ensuring the safety of the clients and adhering to the ever-changing rules and requirements, has been a massive challenge. It would have been very easy just to close these services. Our own One Meal Team, headed by Emma Williams, has done a terrific job in continuing to provide a weekly hot meal and dessert for over 60 patrons at Riverwood Community Service (read Emma's article to find out how they did this!).

Canice's Kitchen (where we have been helping with Sunday lunches for over 13 years) also chose to face this problem head on. Not only have they continued to provide warm, nourishing meals to their clients, but they have also adapted and expanded to offer hot showers, toiletry and sanitary packs, medical services, winter clothing and much more.

Not being able to use the kitchen facilities and dining area as usual has meant that many changes had to be made very quickly. At this time, "virtual cooking teams" are working from their own homes to produce the meals which are distributed each day to the patrons at the gates of Canice's Kitchen. This has been a major commitment from a group of wonderful volunteers.

Our parish, through the Lending a Hand Team, was glad to be able to donate \$1,000 to the Canice's appeal to support their wonderful work. To find out more about the work of Canice's Kitchen or to make a personal donation go to <https://caniceskitchen.org/>

Julia Goff, Lending a Hand

International Nurses' Day

Tuesday May 12 was International Nurses' Day. A day like this seems to have extra significance when we are in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and can appreciate, even more than usual, the immense workload, love and care, shown by these hard-working members of our community.

Lending a Hand, on behalf of our parish, wanted to show our gratitude. So, on the morning of International Nurses' Day, we collected 40 delicious-looking (and smelling!) butterfly cakes from Lugarno Bakery and delivered them to one of our local nursing homes - Our Lady of China at Peakhurst (Peakhurst Lodge). The look on the face of the duty nurse when she opened the big box full of cakes was one of pure delight.

With the help of our wonderful OLF choir, Lending a Hand have previously entertained the residents at this nursing home with a Christmas concert and afternoon tea so it seemed like a fitting local venue to express our gratitude to.

We received a lovely thank you from the Manager, Esther Kam, who said,

"On behalf of all our nurses, I would like to say big thank you for all your thoughtfulness and kindness and appreciation. All my nurses are so happy and you really made their day on International Nurses Day. What a special day for them!! Thank you again."

Sometimes it is just these small gestures of appreciation and recognition that can make a difference to someone else's day.

Emma Williams, Lending a Hand



Saying it with flowers

The new coronavirus, COVID-19, had many of us glued to the news, concerned for loved ones, and adapting our lives to deal with the changes the pandemic was having on our homes, schools and workplaces.

Throughout the world, people were struggling to deal with the stress of the coronavirus pandemic, and social distancing measures and stay-at-home orders made it difficult to show family members you love them.

Of course, by the time this will be published, restrictions will start to relax, but the fear of a resurgence is still in our minds, particularly for the elderly. It's been pretty tough for many but perhaps most difficult for those living in aged-care facilities, especially because visitor restrictions, in some cases, meant only limited or no access to family members.

So, on 15 May, our LAH team thought it would be a nice gesture to brighten up their day and bring some cheer and smiles to the faces of all 80 residents at Peakhurst Lodge, which is run by the Sisters of Our Lady of China.

Each resident was presented with message of "our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time" and a card with the Serenity Prayer, attached to a beautiful ribboned gerbera. The same was also delivered to 13 residents of IRT, Peakhurst, who are given communion by our special ministers.

Once again, the LAH ministry of Our Lady of Fatima, Peakhurst, has represented our whole parish in bringing some love and friendship to the wider community. The recipients were extremely appreciative of this kind gesture.

Camille Philips, Lending a Hand

Lending a hand out the “back of Bourke”

During 2017 Lending a Hand (LAH), on behalf of the parish, donated \$12,000 to assist out-back Queensland drought-affected areas.

In 2018 we became aware of the severity of the drought that rural New South Wales was facing. This drought has been said to be the worst on record. In our efforts to see how we could help, we made contact with the Diocese of Wilcannia- Forbes. They drew our attention to the town of Bourke and surrounding areas that were suffering severely from the drought.

It just so happened that the ABC television program *Compass* was about to show a story of interest. The program followed Mary Anne Gordon, the Pastoral Care Worker in the Parish of Bourke. It was an amazing story of the devastation of the drought and how Mary Anne was such a blessing to the isolated farmers as well as the locals.

LAH decided to donate \$12,000 to support Mary Anne in her efforts to bring hope to those in need. As the drought situation continued to deteriorate LAH decided to hold a fund-raising High Tea in our hall. We were able to donate a further \$2600 to them. To our amazement Mary Anne volunteered to travel to Peakhurst as our guest speaker (not a short journey!)

Mary Anne shared a heart-breaking story of the devastation of the drought. The nonexistence of feed brought about a massive reduction in livestock including their prized breeding stock. This will hinder greatly their recovery efforts. In addition, with no moisture in the ground, farmers have been unable to grow crops. The drought has impacted the local shops and service industries just as severely as the farmers.

I made contact with Mary Anne Gordon recently. I heard that following some good rain earlier this year and follow-up rain the rivers are flowing again. Although further rain is now needed the country is looking good. With the lack of stock in paddocks, the ground is recovering. There are patches of beautiful wild flowers to enjoy. It will take years of good conditions to return stock levels to previous favourable numbers.

The Bourke parishioners are currently live streaming Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green’s Masses. The Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese covers an area larger than half the size of our state. Fortunately, the country towns out west have not been affected by Covid-19 to date.

The Parish Administrator of Bourke is Fr Magnus Kobbi. Fr Magnus hails from a warm African country. The colder climate in Bourke this time of year has been a shock for him. Mary Anne says they purchased some warm slippers for him and he is rarely seen out of them. (The life of an MGL priest with sandals all year round would not suit him!)

Mary Anne said the generous donation from our parish has been a blessing for the people of Bourke. To save struggling families’ finances, we provided all the Christmas presents for the children at parish Christmas functions. We financed several parish activities to bring the isolated farmers together to share a nice meal. Prepaid credit cards of \$200 were handed out to many. Mary Anne brought together a dozen women from the most remote areas in the region and provided a lovely lunch. This was an opportunity for them to share their stories. In addition, she brought along two hairdressers and a foot masseur and each lady received those services and left with one of our prepaid credit cards.

Continued on next page >>>

“Out the Back of Bourke” is an expression I have heard for many years. We use this description when we want to describe a place a long, long way off. Mary Anne told me she visited one family to take communion recently. Leaving at 7.30am, she spent one and a half hours with them and returned home to Bourke at 6pm. She takes jerry cans of petrol with her. The poor quality of the roads is also a big factor when travelling out there.

This has been a great project for Lending a Hand. In addition to the generous donation, it is of paramount importance to the people of Bourke that the parishioners from Our Lady of Fatima in Peakhurst understand their plight, we care and want to give them hope for the future.



Mary Anne Gordon from the parish of Bourke, with Lending a Hand member, Paul Napier

Paul Napier, Lending a Hand

“17th Century Nun’s Prayer”

(Despite at least fifteen minutes deep research on the internet, I cannot find any direct link to the 17th century nor a nun. However, I cannot find any evidence that says otherwiseJ Ed.)

Lord, thou knowest better than know myself that I am growing older and will some day be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody’s affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others’ pains but help me to endure them with patience. I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint – some of them are so hard to live with- but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the Devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talent in unexpected people. And, give me, O Lord, the grace to tell them so. Amen.

The Decalogue for Daily Living

These were written by Pope John XXIII for himself; his own commandments for daily life. They reflect his depth, his simplicity and his humility.

And people stayed at home

And read books
And listened
And they rested
And did exercises
And made art and played
And learned new ways of being
And stopped and listened
More deeply
Someone meditated, someone prayed
Someone met their shadow
And people began to think differently
And people healed.
And in the absence of people who
Lived in ignorant ways
Dangerous, meaningless and heartless,
The earth also began to heal
And when the danger ended and
People found themselves
They grieved for the dead
And made new choices
And dreamed of new visions
And created new ways of living
And completely healed the earth
Just as they were healed.

Kitty O'Meara, Wisconsin, March 2020

Only for today, I will seek to live positively without wishing to solve the problems of my life all at once.

Only for today, I will take the greatest care of my appearance: I will dress modestly; I will not raise my voice; I will be courteous in my behaviour; I will not criticize anyone; I will not claim to improve or to discipline anyone except myself.

Only for today, I will be happy in the certainty that I was created to be happy, not only in the other world but also in this one.

Only for today, I will adapt to circumstances, without requiring all circumstances to be adapted to my own wishes.

Only for today, I will devote ten minutes of my time to some good reading, remembering that just as food is necessary to the life of the body, so good reading is necessary to the life of the soul.

Only for today, I will do one good deed and not tell anyone about it.

Only for today, I will do at least one thing I do not like doing; and if my feelings are hurt, I will make sure that no one notices.

Only for today, I will make a plan for myself: I may not follow it to the letter, but I will make it. And I will be on guard against two evils: hastiness and indecision.

Only for today, I will firmly believe, despite appearances, that the good providence of God cares for me as no one else who exists in this world.

Only for today, I will have no fears. In particular, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe in goodness. Indeed, for twelve hours I can certainly do what might cause me consternation were I to believe I had to do it all my life.



This June issue of The Bark is brought to you by:

Editing: Julia Goff

Design and desktop publishing: Ruth Meagher

Contributors: Fr Tony Alex, Richard Allison, Paula Bounds, Adla Coure, Deb Cummins, Julia Goff, Marissa de Marcellis, Peter Esho, Mike Flanagan, Catherine Matthews, Craig Moran, Paul Napier, Susie Paino, David Payne, Jenni Payne, Camille Philips, Ravilya Sedlar, Tony Thorpe and Emma Williams.

How to contribute to the Bark

Articles: please submit your articles as a Word document (not as a pdf.) Articles may be edited for reasons of space but you will be given an opportunity to review your work before publication.

Photographs: please submit medium /high resolution photos with captions provided.

Ideas: please email us at olfbark@gmail.com or telephone Emma on 0418 451 276. You may send your article and photographs either to olfbark@gmail.com or on a USB stick (which will be returned) or as hard copy.

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