

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL REPORT FOR THE 2008 AGM

Acknowledgement

The Council acknowledges that the lands on which the parishes are located are the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people and we pay respect to their elders.

Council members

The Council comprised the following members during the 2007- 2008 year:

Ex Officio: Fr Anthoni, Fr Ben, Fr Bob, Liz Clark, Carmel Purdey, Monique Waring and Dianna Hardy.

St Francis Xavier Parish: Karen Nolan, Monica Nitz (Joint minutes secretary), Vince Fazio, Veronika Bellis, Clare Hangan and Michael Robotham.

St Clare's Parish: Trish Nicholson (Chair), Julian Sakowski, Jennifer Micheli (Joint minutes secretary) and Liz Allan.

We thank outgoing members Julian Sakowski, Jennifer Micheli, Karen Nolan (members from 2005) and Michael Robotham (member from 2007) for their valuable contribution to the Parishes and their involvement in the many activities during their council membership.

Mission Statement of the Parishes in Partnership

We, the people of St Francis Xavier's and St Clare's parishes, celebrating God's presence and our faith values through worship, outreach, service, justice and hospitality.

Procedure

The Parish Pastoral Council has met on the first Thursday of each month over the past year with the exception of January. In order for new members to understand their role as a Parish Council member, Liz Clark has led the meeting with a reflection on the role of the Parish Pastoral Council within the life of the church. Monthly reports from the Parish Priest, the Pastoral Associate and the St Francis Xavier School Principal are received and discussed by the Council at each meeting. Financial information from both Parishes was included in the Parish Priest's report where necessary. Each member of the Parish Council was assigned and was responsible for various portfolios within the church community. These include the Youth group (Julian Sakowski and Dianna Hardy), Communication portfolio (Monique Waring), Social Justice (Karen Nolan and Michael Robotham), School Community (Vince Fazio and Clare Hangan), Welcoming / Hospitality (Veronika Bellis) and Adult Education (Trish Nicholson). Reports from each group were presented to the committee at each meeting.

Activities

A reflection day was held in October last year with a focus on developing a Pastoral Plan which includes a consideration of leadership in the community, Pastoral needs within the parish, and the future role of the Pastoral Council. A development plan from that day, which took into consideration the preliminary results from the parish survey, was for the Council to be more visible to the members of both Parishes. A letter from the chair was attached to the weekly newsletter, informing them of the Parish Council function within the parish. All members of the Parish Pastoral Council were commissioned at a ceremony in February, introducing them to parishioners at both St Francis Xavier and St Clare. It has been proposed and supported that a biography of each member will be published in the newsletter over the following weeks so that parishioners are able to identify the Council members within their parish.

St Francis Xavier School

Regular reports regarding the activities of the school have been received throughout the past year. After much planning the renovations will be commencing this year. The school has been vibrant in the offering of catechetical programs and ongoing development that is seen as an integral part of the school curriculum. Carmel Purdey and all staff members of St Francis Xavier School are to be congratulated on the exemplary behaviour of students and developments within the school that have been reported to the Council.

Communication Portfolio

Ongoing development of the website has continued with relevant newsworthy items being made available for parishioners to access.

Youth Group

A number of youth activities have been organized during the past year, including a tennis day, pizza night and movie night. These activities have been fairly well supported by the youth from the parish. Julian Sakowski was willing to take on the role of World Youth Day 2008 coordinator for the parish. This has involved attendance at a number of functions to ensure the active involvement of the parish in this special event. Julian provided an overview of WYD at all Masses, and an information brochure was attached to the newsletter on Easter weekend, inviting parishioners to become involved in 'Days in the Dioceses' by offering a bed to international visitors.

The Cross and Icon arrived at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Deepdene on the 2 May with the procession arriving at Our Lady of Victories, Camberwell later that night. The youth group of St Francis was invited to lead an hour of prayer during the night, which they did by re-enacting and focusing on the youth interpretation of the Stations of the Cross. What a special event that was for those who were present to witness this performance! The youth are to be congratulated on their outstanding effort and performance and it is hoped that they will continue to participate in youth activities such as a regular youth Mass at St Francis.

Kathy and Julian Sakowski are interested in developing the youth group within the parish by offering the young people the opportunity to meet on a regular basis and participating in various activities. We thank them both for their involvement and support in this most important activity within the parish.

Social justice

A trivia night was arranged last year with over \$3000 raised for East Timor. A fantastic night was had by all who attended due to the fantastic and witty efforts of both Julian Sakowski and Martin Hardy.

Mental Health has been a topic of discussion and an information session is to be organized to coincide with Mental Health Week.

Social Group

In July last year, all parishioners were invited to share in Fr Bob's celebration of his Golden Jubilee. This event was well supported with standing room only for those who attended. Father Bob was especially honoured with members from his family present to share with him on this very special occasion.

Christmas lunch was organised for the more mature members of the parish at the end of last year, with many of the youth serving at the meal during the afternoon.

Welcoming committee

Veronika Bellis has taken on the role of welcoming new parishioners. A welcome pack is provided during the visit to ensure that parishioners are aware of the various Mass times and other services offered within the parish community. A great effort has also been made by parishioners in welcoming new attendees at Mass over the weekend.

School community

Links are being forged between the school and the parish community with Vince Fazio and Clare Hangan actively seeking out opportunities for those families attending St Francis Xavier School.

Other activities

A representative from the parish was invited to attend a special function to receive a **message stick** on behalf of the parishes. The message stick has been on display during special celebrations such as Social Justice Sunday.

The RCIA program has been very successful over the past year with 6 candidates baptised at Easter. The weekly publication in the newsletter provided some insight about the candidates involved in the RCIA Program.

Lenten programs offered in preparation for Easter were well supported within the parish

Last November the **SFX Tennis Club** celebrated 50 years. On behalf of the Parish Council, we congratulate all members and wish you well in the future.

Last year **Fr Peter O'Neill (ofm)** provided an insightful presentation about Franciscan spirituality and ecology.

Mass times at St Clare's were changed last year with no midnight Mass being offered on Christmas Eve. The issue of Mass times is an agenda item for the Parish Council to consider the options that may be considered in future. A decision will be made after the census has been completed at both Parishes later this month.

Whitefriars College students involved in a VCAL project completed their work on the **St Clare's Basement** towards the end of last year. On the 13 April this year, the youth were invited to visit the basement to view the changes that had been made. While the attendance was not great, those who did attend were enthusiastic about the opportunity of being able to use 'The Basement' for future youth activities. Well done to the Whitefriars' students on a job well done. Your achievements have provided the opportunity for the parish to provide an area specifically for the youth.

Work is already underway for the VCAL students once again from Whitefriars College on the quadrangle area outside 'The Basement'. The plan is to provide an entertainment area for a BBQ when using 'The Basement'.

During November last year a **RSL Memorial Mass** was celebrated with many prominent members of Whitehorse Council attending. Father Bob also celebrated a special Anzac Mass last month.

A major project, undertaken last year, involved undertaking a **Parish Survey** at both parishes. A survey questionnaire was developed and piloted on 10 parishioners. They were able to provide feedback on the format of the questionnaire prior to it being made available to all parishioners. 185 questionnaires were received and dutifully processed by Mary Rossely and Jennifer Micheli. Thank you both for the hard, tireless work. This has resulted in a comprehensive report providing a working document for the Parish Council to plan for the future needs of the parish. A spreadsheet has been prepared, noting the items that have scored low in the survey, and a decision will be made each year about the items that will be considered for action by the Council. The most important items that have been identified this year include the development of youth activities and the opportunity for parishioners to become more actively involved as laypersons in leading services in the parish. A comprehensive report will be provided for all parishioners to review the outcomes of the survey. Thank you to all the parishioners who completed the survey. Your feedback has provided the Council with the opportunity to address the issues that you considered important. It should also be recorded that there was overwhelmingly positive feedback received about the Friars. How wonderful it is to note that the hard work and dedication, with which Fathers Anthoni, Ben and Bob approach their work within the parish, has been reported in many of the survey forms returned.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a special word of thanks must be extended to all the members who will be retiring from the Council after the AGM. The functioning of the Parish Council is only made possible by the selflessness of the volunteers who offer their time to provide support to the parish community. I thank all the members who will remain members of the Council in the coming year, and trust that we will be able to continue the hard work that has been the focus of the Council in the past. I would also extend my thanks to the Parish office staff for providing the administration support to the committee throughout the year. A final thanks must be extended to the friars who serve the community so tirelessly. While watching the Friars celebrate every Mass, we are reminded of how fortunate we are to have them present in our community. Their selflessness, unassuming manner and the humility with which they serve God provide us with an opportunity to witness first hand the Franciscan way of life. Thank you to Fathers Anthoni, Ben and Bob (including Father Peter).

Trish Nicholson (Chairperson)