



St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Parish Blackburn South

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A Report to the People of God of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish from the Parish Pastoral Council Members

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Prior to our lives being significantly changed and challenged through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Parish Pastoral Council took receipt of all the collated information and feedback gathered from the Parish discernment and feedback process conducted in 2019. We were greatly enthused by the interest and ideas of Parishioners about how best we could move our Parish Community forward. Under the guidance of Marg Gearon, Darren McLean, Mike Yore and Fr Gerard the Parish Pastoral Council was formed and took your feedback as the mandate for our work. By the end of 2019 we were prepared to begin our work in earnest early in the new year!

As COVID took hold of the world, our work was stymied and while we had every intention to keep a focus on that work, as a group we were also called to assist in the management of the various directives we received from the Government and Archdiocese – the urgent often imposed itself upon the important. While this letter may sound like a bit of a defence, it is not. Rather it is an evaluation of our work to date and, as directed by our Draft Charter, an account to you of that work. Albeit in the COVID context.

Throughout 2020 the Parish Pastoral Council met regularly, predominantly via Zoom. These meetings and the consequent Executive Meetings were the birthplaces of many ideas, foremost of which was how do we keep our Parish Family connected during a time when, at least physically, we were separated. As a result, throughout the early part of 2020 and, especially, in the long lockdown, the Parish Pastoral Council organised the following:

- Sunday Mass videoed and uploaded to the Parish Website for Parishioners' use. Some 26 Sunday Masses were recorded.
- Uploading the Parish Bulletin to the Website and emailing it to those who had the means to receive it. Additionally, to keep Parishioners connected, a printed copy was letter box dropped to 60+ Parishioners each week who were unable to access the Bulletin electronically. The Primary School was also key in the distribution of the Bulletin to our School Families.

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Getting to know 'The Good Shepherd' to be a good shepherd. (Mark 6:30 - 34)

- Two times during the long lockdown Parishioners were invited to join a “Zoom get together” where we were able to touch base with each other – catch up on the news, mourn those Parishioners who had died and to share ideas about how we might keep all Parishioners connected as the year progressed.
- The uploading of the Parish Feast Day video and letter box drop commemorating the Feast of St Luke was very well received.
- Additionally, the invitation to the Christmas Masses that were also letter box dropped throughout the Parish was another initiative.
- The re-introduction of the outdoor Christmas Vigil Mass and the introduction of a 4.00 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass – especially for the elderly and vulnerable.
- The formulation and execution of clearly worded and marked COVID safe procedures for those times when we could return to the Church for Eucharist were time consuming but essential:
 - Seat signs
 - On-line booking
 - Registrars and cleaners
 - Instructions to Special Ministers and Ministers of the Word

All of this was the busy-ness of the Council’s work. It would be remiss of me not to say that much of the background work (and a lot of the organising) often fell to a few and it is important to thank especially Sonya O’Farrell, Dean Stone and Fr Gerard.

While the pandemic took some of our focus, we were still able to focus on the important work of the Parish Pastoral Council. Later in the year when we could meet face to face and through the facilitation skills of Dale Dixon we began the important work of discerning what our mission and vision as a Parish Pastoral Council is in the current context of St Luke’s and what, through your initial feedback, were our priorities moving forward. Today during Mass you will hear these and be asked to contribute to these priorities.

At our next meeting we will discuss your feedback from today and use it to direct our work further. Additionally we will discuss and adopt a Charter, similar to a Constitution, which will govern our work, our reporting back to you and each member’s tenure on the Council.

It is Lent, the great journey towards the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. As we know in our lives and through our faith, the journey can sometimes be turbulent but we look to the Resurrection with joyful hope because it is the joy and hope of Easter that brings God’s love into our lives. It is with joy, hope and love that the Parish Pastoral Council wishes to serve you. To echo St Theresa of Avila, *“Christ has no hands but yours...”*

With every best wish,

John Rhynehart
Chairperson

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