

# St. Bernadette's Parish Pastoral Council Annual Report 2019-2020



## Introduction

This is a short summary of the work undertaken by the PPC during the last year. If you would like more information about our aims and objectives or would like to make suggestions regarding our future work, please do not hesitate to speak to any member of the council or contact us at [ppc@stbernadettesparish.org](mailto:ppc@stbernadettesparish.org)

## A Parish Pastoral Council

A PPC is a faith-filled leadership group through which priests and people work together as Co responsible partners in furthering the mission of Christ in their own parish. It involves a committed group of people of God (clergy, religious and lay people) being called upon to review pastoral matters, reflect on them thoroughly and collaborate in planning the way forward for the parish. The PPC should be a representative body in which the diversity of the whole parish community is reflected. It is a means whereby all parishioners can take part in discussions that relate to the spiritual and pastoral development of the parish. The Council is "Pastoral" in that its primary concern is pastoral issues, not administration, buildings, management or finance.

Specific responsibilities of the PPC include:

- discerning the pastoral and spiritual needs of the parish community and involving the whole parish in response to these needs
- supporting parishioners in understanding and living their baptismal call as followers of Christ
- providing structures that will bring together the pastoral and spiritual needs of the parish with the talents of parishioners and the resources in the parish
- ensuring that effective dialogue takes place within the parish, the Pastoral Area, the Diocese and the wider community
- reviewing annually the contribution it is making in the life of the parish.

Here, in St. Bernadette's Parish, our PPC Mission Statement proclaims:

***"We, the Pastoral Council of St. Bernadette's Parish, inspired by the love of Jesus, will try to develop a vibrant and inclusive spiritual community which welcomes the active participation of everyone in the faith life of the parish."***

PPC members commit to attend meetings regularly: these are kept brief and are very focused. The

members grow in knowledge of the parish and its mission and aim to emulate Christ and His Way.

In the monthly meetings, a prayerful atmosphere is crucial, and members will spend the opening period of each meeting in prayer, invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit and listening to, and reflecting upon, a gospel reading and related homily.

### **PPC Membership during the year:**

Very Rev Brendan Hickland P.P. (President of the Council)

Very Rev Michael Spence

Michael Doherty, (Chair)	Delores McFadden
Eamon Foster (Vice-Chair)	Bernie Farry
Gerry Mooney, (Secretary)	Gerry Steele
Patricia McFlynn	Anne McCann

### **Period of Change**

We started the 'new term' in September with key changes. We said farewell to Fr Armstrong as he retired from his role as PP of St Bernadette's. We wish him many years of happiness in his retirement and thank him for his years of service and commitment to the parish.

We also welcomed Fr Brendan Hickland as the new Parish Priest for Holy Rosary and St Bernadette's and Fr Michael Spence as priest in residence in St Bernadette's. We are delighted to have both Fr Brendan and Fr Michael join us and look forward to continue working with and supporting them in their new roles.

### **PPC Formation**

We continued the work we began in 2018 and 2019 in looking at a number of pastoral themes (programmes) that may be undertaken by our PPC. We have received great support from the Living Church through the year in guiding us in this process.

An 'Away Day' was held in September 2019 in Tobar Mhuire where members of the PPC met for a day of prayer, discernment and planning with Jim Deeds from the Living Church.

In November, a follow-up session was facilitated, again by Jim Deeds, to help identify key pastoral themes that our PPC might explore. These were broadly identified as

- Parish Prayer
- Parish social responsibilities
- Parish Communication
- Healing / Ministry of Outreach
- Preaching/Teaching

In March we held a further session to help identify specific programmes that might be delivered under the above themes. The work continues with the planning, prioritisation & practical implementation of these programmes. Further information will be provided by the PPC as this work progresses.

### **Advent Preparation**

In preparation for Advent, the PPC invited children from St Bernard's primary school to provide artwork for the Advent and Christmas season. We were overwhelmed by the response from the children and the beautiful artwork provided. The artwork was displayed for a number of weeks at the back of the church and provided a beautiful and colourful addition to the church. We would like

to thank St Bernard's primary school, the teachers and especially the children for their beautiful artwork and their hard work at a busy time of the school year.

The PPC provided a number of short Advent reflections which were distributed with the parish bulletin during the Advent season. These reflections linked to the gospel readings and provided further thoughts on the purpose of the Advent season, in preparation for the birth of Christ.

### **Advent & Lenten Calendars**

As in previous years, in preparation for the seasons of Advent and Lent, the PPC produced an Advent Calendar & Lenten Calendar for parishioners with daily thoughts and reflections during each of these important church seasons. The reflections were also shared using a number of social media platforms, reaching not only parishioners but many others beyond St Bernadette's parish. The calendars and their messages were warmly received and most appreciated by parishioners and others.

### **New Parish Bulletin**

A new format for a combined parish bulletin and missalette was introduced in recent months. In preparation, the PPC considered and discussed its introduction on a trial basis, with Fr Hickland and Fr Spence.

### **Lenten Programme**

A primary focus for the PPC each year is the preparation for our annual Lenten Programme. This year, the Living Church encouraged many parishes to deliver ***"No Greater Love – a biblical walk through Christ's passion"***.

This five-week DVD-led and discussion programme journeys with Christ in the final days and hours of His passion – from the Garden of Gethsemane to Mount Calvary.

A training day was held in January for those facilitating the course and was attended by some members of St Bernadette's PPC.

Unfortunately, the programme had to be cancelled after the first three sessions, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the social & health restrictions implemented. However, Ascension Press very kindly provided online access to the DVD material which was made available via the parish website. This provided an opportunity for all parishioners to complete or participate in the programme from the comfort of their own homes.

We would like to express our sincere thanks St Bernard's Primary School and Mr Kieran McTaggart for the use of the school hall and facilities for the Lenten Programme. We would also like to thank Marie McIvor and Michael Goodall, former members of the PPC, for their continued help and support in facilitating the Lenten Programme.

The PPC would also like to thank Michael McGarrigle for his help and support in organising the banner and printed handout material used during the programme.

The PPC is extremely grateful for the support shown by our parishioners for the Lenten Programme each year.

### **Pastoral Community Forum (PCF)**

Work continues on the development of the South and East Belfast Pastoral Area Forum and greater collaboration between the various parishes in our Pastoral Area. A number of meetings

have been held throughout the past year, exploring various initiatives and how these may be realised within the life of our parishes. Representatives from St Bernadette's PPC continue to attend the forum. The work of the PCF is still in formation. Further details will be provided on the PCF as and when available.

### **COVID Pandemic**

It has been an anxious and difficult time for many in recent months with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on all aspects of life. The PPC continues to meet during this time, using Zoom technology, to discuss matters in relation to the parish. The PPC recently discussed the re-opening of the church for private prayer with the parish priests and continue to consider the preparation required for the future re-opening of the church for public mass celebrations.

### **Looking to the Future**

If you would like to be involved in the work of the Parish Council or provide support to the programmes or initiatives of the PPC, please accept our warmest invitation to approach a member of the PPC or contact us at [ppc@stbernadettesparish.org](mailto:ppc@stbernadettesparish.org)