

St Bernadette's Parish Pastoral Council – Annual Report

Welcome to our annual report for 2022/23 which provides us with the opportunity to inform you about the purpose of St Bernadette's Parish Pastoral Council, (or PPC), provide a brief insight into the activities undertaken over the last 12 months, and also to highlight our plans and ambitions for the year ahead.

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

A Parish Pastoral Council

A PPC is a faith based group through which priests and people work together as coresponsible partners in furthering the mission of Christ in parish communities. It involves a 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. It is a means whereby parishioners can take part in discussions that relate to the spiritual and pastoral development of the parish, it is not about the administration, buildings, management or finance of the 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 Membership

Very Reverend Brendan Hickland P.P.	Very Reverend Paul Morely
Michael Doherty	Bernie Farry
Eamon Foster	Peggy McCann
Michael McDonald	Patricia McFlynn

Work Undertaken by St Bernadette's Pastoral Council

After the restrictions of lockdown were eased, we were thankfully able to bring some normality back into our lives and resume daily routines and activities, including returning to parish life and attending Mass in-person.

As a pastoral council we were able to meet once again in-person for our regular monthly meetings to discuss and plan for various activities within our parish. We have continued to reflect on and discuss the pastoral issues that will be affecting the whole church, and at a diocesan level, on the Church Synod taking place in October 2023, and the Down and Connor Pathways to the Future programme

Pathways to the Future

Pathways to the Future is a process by which the diocese has been proactively preparing for the challenges that are to be faced for the church in the years ahead, focusing on how priests are supported, how parishes are structured, how liturgical services are celebrated, and the future role of parishioners. This is a critical time for the diocese and to put it into perspective, there are currently 86 parishes and 146 churches which are ministered to by around 84 priests

in active ministry. It is forecast that within 10 years, the number of priests in active ministry will be half, and it is estimated that within 20 years, there may only be 24 priests available.

During the year there was an awareness campaign launched by the diocese and each PPC was asked to gather information from parishioners in relation to Mass attendance and aspects of the Sunday Liturgy; this information was gathered at Masses on 20th and 21st May 2023 and collated by the PPC and has been provided by all parishes for consideration by the Pathways Steering Committee.

As part of this process of change, representatives from the PPC have also attended meetings to be informed of any developments and in turn, to maintain awareness in our parish, there are regular articles placed in the weekly bulletin. It is anticipated that as the process develops and further information becomes available, that the parish will hold information sessions for all parishioners to attend and hear more about the challenges and changes being planned.

Welcoming Ministry

When we returned to Mass after the lockdown, a number of volunteers came forward as stewards to greet people as they came into Church and assist with directions. This was warmly welcomed by parishioners and the PPC felt that there was a definite role for continuing the welcoming theme. Therefore, during the year the Welcoming Ministry was formally established, initially for the weekday Masses which was then extended to include the weekend, and stewards are now available at each Mass to welcome, assist and direct all parishioners and visitors as they enter and leave the church.

Advent and Lent

During Lent, in addition to the variety of online and printed materials that were available for parishioners, the PPC introduced Morning Prayers which were offered before weekday Masses and also Stations of the Cross on the Tuesday evenings before the Easter ceremonies.

It is now also an established part of our activities that the PPC produces Advent & Lenten Calendars for parishioners which contain daily reflections during these important times of the year. More recently, in this era of social media the reflections are now being shared around the world and in addition, special editions of the calendars have been produced and made available for the children of our parish.

Holy Rosary PPC

During the year, we had an initial meeting with members of the Holy Rosary PPC to discuss the work undertaken by both pastoral councils. It was very useful to meet and share ideas and experiences, and we agreed to have a further meeting this year, to identify and explore any possible areas of collaboration between the parishes.

The Year Ahead

Over the next 12 months, we will be continuing with our activities in faith development and hope to have a higher social media presence to promote and inform parishioners of our work. In addition, we will be inviting parishioners to come forward and consider joining the PPC and contribute to this important function within our parish community, particularly during this time of change that is taking place through the Pathways to the Future.