

St. Bernadette's Parish Pastoral Council Annual Report 2020-2021



Introduction

It is customary, at this time of the year for the PPC to report on its activities throughout the year. This is a short summary of the work undertaken by St Bernadette's PPC from September 2020 to June 2021. 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-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. Thereafter, the PPC will discuss a range of items from the agenda relating to spiritual and pastoral matters concerning the parish.

PPC Membership during the year:

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

Very Reverend Michael Spence

Michael Doherty, (Chair)

Delores McFadden

Eamon Foster (Vice-Chair)

Bernie Farry

Gerry Mooney, (Secretary)

Gerry Steele

Patricia McFlynn

Anne McCann

Church in a pandemic world

It has been a difficult year for many, coping amidst the ongoing pandemic that continues to impact on so many aspects of our lives: limitations on our ability to work, celebrate, socialise, visit the homes of family and friends and support those who are sick or in need. Our ability to meet, pray and celebrate as a parish community has been disrupted throughout the year, in particular, our attendance at Sunday and daily masses and our ability to properly comfort those at a time of mourning.

Yet despite the many difficulties, there is renewed hope and optimism as we begin to see a gradual return to what will be a new normal that will require a new understanding, a new awareness and care for one another.

The church continues to respond in these difficult times, sharing the Gospel message of love and hope and through the generosity of volunteers who enable the practical operation of the church on a day-by-day basis. The PCC is most appreciative of all those volunteers who continue to work so hard and give so freely of their time in support of St Bernadette's parish.

PPC at work

Due to the current restrictions, the PPC has continued to meet each month via Zoom, to carry on its work on behalf of the parish. Various discussions have taken place over the past year on spiritual and practical matters in relation to the church. These have sometimes included challenging discussions on matters such as revised mass times and decisions on Christmas Day public mass celebrations. Such decisions are taken in the wider context of the diocese, based on the practical and spiritual needs of the parish and after much prayer and reflection.

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.

During the season of Advent the PPC produced weekly Advent reflections linked to the Sunday Gospel message. These reflections were a reminder of the importance of preparation through the Advent season and the relevance of the Gospel message in our everyday lives.

Lenten Programme

A primary focus for the PPC each year is the preparation for our annual Lenten Programme. However, due to the current pandemic it was not possible to meet collectively as in previous years.

The PPC considered a number of alternative options before agreeing to use the Via Dolorosa programme offered by the Living Church. St Bernadette's PPC in conjunction with Holy Rosary PPC came together to deliver the programme on behalf of both parishes.

A series of readings, reflections, prayers and music were recorded by parishioners and members of each PPC council for each session of the 5 x week programme. The short 20-30min recordings were made available on St Bernadette's Parish website and remain available as a prayerful resource on the parish website today.

St Bernadette's PPC Initiatives

A number of parish themes were identified by St Bernadette's PPC in March 2020 as potential parish programmes. This continues the work the PPC initiated in 2019/2020 with the assistance of the Living Church. The pandemic situation has limited the ability of the PPC to progress these. However, we are actively discussing several initiatives currently. More information will be provided on these programmes in the future.

Looking to the Future

St Bernadette's PPC depends on the commitment and participation of members of its PPC to help *"develop a vibrant and inclusive spiritual community which welcomes the active participation of everyone in the faith life of the parish."*

Some members of the current PPC will retire at the end of June 2021 and others will retire over the next year having served the PPC over the past number of years. In order to ensure continuity and continue the good work and programmes within the parish, we will shortly be seeking new members who will be willing to join and commit to serving a term on the PPC. Further information on this will be provided in the autumn.

In the meantime, if you would like to find out more information on the work of the Parish Pastoral 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