

St. Bernadette's Parish Pastoral Council Annual Report 2021-2022



Introduction

Welcome to our annual report which allows us the opportunity to inform you about the purpose of our Parish Pastoral Council, or PPC, and the various activities undertaken by St Bernadette's PPC from September 2021 to June 2022, 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-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:

Fr Brendan Hickland P.P. (President of the Council)
Fr Michael Spence

Michael Doherty, (Chair) Delores McFadden
Eamon Foster (Vice-Chair) Bernie Farry
Patricia McFlynn (Secretary)

The Work Undertaken by St Bernadette's Pastoral Council & Parishioners

The past two years have been a difficult time for all of us, impacting greatly upon our lives through restrictions which have limited our daily routines and activities, including the disruption our parish life as we could not attend Mass or pray as a community. However, over recent months we have witnessed a gradual easing of the restrictions and have started to see and enjoy a resumption of normal life.

Stewards, Cleaners, Volunteers

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, there was still so much good work carried out by volunteers in the various Parish groups. This was particularly evident before, during and after Mass through the work of the teams of cleaners and stewards who gave of their time so freely to ensure that we kept within the government guidelines and kept us safe as we practiced our faith. The PPC would like to acknowledge this hard work and effort of the volunteers who contributed to the work of the parish committees and of the volunteers who assisted in our safe return to Mass and daily prayer in the Church.

Pastoral Planning

During lockdown, with the assistance of technology, the PPC continued to meet for our regular monthly meetings but in early June, we were delighted to attend our first in-person meeting for over two years. Through all the meetings we were able to discuss and plan for the pastoral matters arising within the parish and the Church, which was particularly relevant this year in light of the forthcoming Synod. In addition, despite the limitations placed on our activities during the pandemic, we were still able to continue with a number of our initiatives that have become an established part of our parish, and also to plan for new initiatives for the year ahead.

Church Synod

On Sunday 10th October 2021, Pope Francis formally opened the Diocesan Phase of the Synodal Pathway, which signalled the commencement of the Church's desire to listen to the Holy Spirit and all members of the Church in order to discern what God is saying to us and calling us to do at this current time. This consultation phase in preparation for the universal synod in 2023 provided our parish community with the opportunity to have a say and contribute to the forward direction and mission of our Church.

On Ash Wednesday, we launched our parish listening exercise with the distribution of questions that allowed us, as parishioners, to express our views and insights as part of this consultation phase; there was also the facility to complete the questionnaire online, which many of the parishioners used. The role of the PPC was to gather the responses and bring them together under the various themes to form

part of the contribution from the Diocese of Down and Connor. We received a good number of responses and we wholeheartedly felt that the parish of St Bernadette's made a valued contribution to this important period in the history of the Church.

Outreach

During the year, we met with the Church Development Officer from Knockbreda Methodist Church to discuss the various activities that were taking place among the local church communities and to explore future collaboration.

Advent and Lenten Calendars

In preparation for the seasons of Advent and Lent, the PPC produced an Advent Calendar & Lenten Calendar for parishioners which contained 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. In addition, during the season of Advent, a special calendar was produced and made available for the school children of our parish.

These calendars have now become an established part of our annual activities and provide an opportunity for us to enjoy a short period of daily reflection at these important times for our Christian faith.

Lenten Programme

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we were unable to hold our annual Lenten Programme this year, so we decided to re-visit our guided prayer programme, 'Walking with Jesus along the Via Dolorosa' which we had delivered last year, along with the parish of Holy Rosary. The programme, which was available online, allowed parishioners the opportunity to take some time to pray and reflect on the suffering and joyful resurrection of our Lord.

The Year Ahead

As we plan for the year ahead, we hope to establish and develop the following in early autumn. More information will follow in August and September. In the meantime, we would ask parishioners to give some thought as to how they might get involved and contribute to the pastoral welfare of St Bernadette's parish.

Welcoming Group

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 there was a definite role for continuing the welcoming theme. Therefore, in September we hope to establish a Welcoming Group to continue this activity of greeting and assisting parishioners as they enter the Church.

New Members of the PPC

As a number of the PPC members are retiring next year, we would like to invite parishioners to consider joining the PPC and contribute to this important function within our parish community. Therefore, during September and October, we will be producing a number of articles in the parish bulletin which will detail the role and function of a PPC, along with two information evenings to hear from members of the PPC and from a representative from the Living Church to answer any questions.