

What happened in the parish in October 2021: Parish Report

October began as our last month in lockdown and fittingly finished on Sunday, 31 October, with the five member live-streaming team managing the last live-stream only Mass.

Meetings and Action:

Parish group meetings by zoom continued, including the school-parish team, parish pastoral team, the PDLT, Social Committee, Liturgy, Finance, Discernment, Ignatian Spirituality, St Vincent de Paul and Small Christian Community. The Legion of Mary, as always met and prayed via the telephone.

The Parish-School team continue to wrestle with the ever-changing Covid protocols and the implications for parish sacraments and school/class masses. We seem to review our plans for Sacraments execution on a weekly basis. However, with hope in our hearts and our fingers crossed, we did some provisional planning for sacraments and masses in 2022.

The Liturgy group planned for the end of the Season of Creation, which closed in early October. An article written for our newsletter, which included the approach of Franciscan ecological spirituality and our work with the Christians Coalition for Climate Change has been circulated around various faith groups in the wider city of Port Phillip. Within the month, our liturgies highlighted International Older People's Sunday, with the theme; digital inequality; Anti-poverty week, Mission month, including World Mission Sunday with the theme of vaccine inequity and justice, and Mental Health Month. We ended the month looking towards the Glasgow Climate Change Conference, continuing our 'Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor' focus which occurred through the many Sundays of Season of Creation. All these were expressed in various ways through liturgical symbols, articles in our newsletter, specific prayers, and intercessions in Prayer of the Faithful, in song and through John's homilies.

A one-off meeting was held with Mass Monitors as we prepare to open up to in-person masses and we discussed the approach we would take at the door; action to take in the event of challenging scenarios, organising the space in the foyer to receive people, signage and ways of informing people of the regulations for return before return including use of the newsletter; through Telephone Tree co-ordinators and community visitors and others; text messages, in Notices after live-stream Mass, our website and 'word of mouth'. Fr John penned a special letter of welcome and return to parishioners, sent through both the e-newsletter and the post.

Caring for our Community

We had a wealth on online social activity in October with Mingle on Monday – with lots of parishioners and online viewers chatting on a number of topics; Poetry and Plonk, which brought forth new people with either a love for or hidden talents of poetry, as well as our residents poetry and short-story writers, Fiona and Toni. Finally, through Music with the Brazilians we explored music, culture and migration. All offered fun, connection and an appreciation of a sense of belonging.

Our pastoral care activities saw us talking via phone, FaceTime or zoom with parishioners on a regular basis. Fr John managed to get into hospitals and hospices when people were ill or close to dying. We held a few funerals for people from the Mission, from the streets of St Kilda and longer-term parishioners. Where that wasn't possible, Fr John conducted memorials.

Networking

We met in our monthly St Kilda Ecumenical Group with the Baptist and Anglican ministers discussing how we are all working through lockdown, looking after our parishes with points of commonality and offering support to one another. At our network group meeting with the Multi-Faith Network

(both Christian and non-Christian) auspiced by the City of Port Phillip, we had a presentation from Alfred Mental and Addiction Health on how to use 'Psychological First Aid' to support people in distress. This is a mental health tool to be used by the ordinary person in support of others. We agreed to form a Climate Action Working Group to develop key climate actions as part of the Multi-Faith Action Plan 2022 and we shared information and resources around domestic violence, Parliament of World Religions and the Council's Advisory committee on the LGBTIQA community.

New Mission Vision

We continued to be involved with Archdiocese formation as much as possible, including participating in their workshop series, 'Leading a Missionary parish'. As part of their resourcing commitment to parishes, they are training people in how to use the Ignatian Spirituality approach to prayer, which they advise parishes to use as a opening discernment tool in meetings with parishioners before the practical or exploratory discussions on the new vision begin. The pastoral associate accepted an invitation from the Archdiocese to be one of the trainers of people from various parishes. This was conducted via zoom.

Christine also met with the workers from St Joseph/Holy Cross and St Mary's/Balaclava for a general catch-up; and later in the month, the three priests met for a chat on how we are will be opening up, what issues we anticipate and how we can support one another. This was the direction given from the Discernment Group to how we will proceed for the rest of the year.

Discernment Group

The Discernment Group has been busy with working out the steps to caring for our community post-lockdown and looking towards forming into Mission with other parishes. For now, we will be:

- A. Focusing on the care of and rebuilding of our parishes post lockdown; and
- B. once we get past opening and the issues it brings, to begin discussions with our parishioners on the new vision.
- C. In the meantime, to maintain a constant flow of communication with our parishioners on what's happening either with the other parishes or with the Archdiocese.
- D. Continue to meet with the workers, priests and representatives from the other two parishes and as the pandemic is the point of commonality to hold discussions around:
 - I. How our parishes have re-emerged.
 - II. The issues, difficulties, lights of hope and gifts that we have experienced – anticipated and unexpected.
 - III. Find ways of supporting one another.
 - IV. Perhaps look for ways where we can collaborate, e.g. Advent activities.

Keeping Busy in the Office

The new protocols for opening up our faith community has kept Jane busy in the office ensuring that we have all the documentation and notices so parishioners are well informed about the regulations which will govern us for a period of time.

As we open up, all those who have put their weddings on hold have led the charge into Jane's office and it's paperwork city in there. Along with Safeguarding issues, finance reports and general admin duties and school liaison work, Jane has been has kept us all safe, informed and compliant, whether from her home or work office.