

## **Minutes of the St Mary's Parish Mt Albert Annual General Meeting**

**Date:** Sunday 02 July 2023  
**Location:** St Mary's Church, Kitenui Ave, Mt Albert  
**Time:** 11:00 am

**Attendees:** Fr. Rob O'Brien, Dave Wood, Dianne McArdle, Megan Williams, Emma Edge, Sheila White, Jocelyn Gamble, Jim Howley, Yvonne Sang, Roland & Sylila Monteiro, Phil Marshall, Kath & Pat Faughey, Joe Brownfield, Delia D'mello, Ross & Pam Courtney, Penny Tang, Honorine Franswah & Lovlin Franswah, and Richard Perillo

**Apologies:** Pauline Scanlan, Peter Bergin, Oonagh Turner, Marist Sisters, Kevin O'Connor, Caroline O'Connor, Trish Wood, and Gay Kelly

**1. Welcome / Opening Prayer** – Fr. Rob O'Brien led the prayer and opened the meeting at 11:05 am.

**2. Previous Minutes** – Confirmed by Dave Wood upon motion of Dianne McArdle and as seconded by Phil Marshall.

**3. Chairperson's Report** – Dave Wood

Dave made emphasis that the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is a representative body consisting of the Parish Priest and a team of parishioners. Its purpose is to work a collaborative body to assist the Parish Priest in planning and setting direction for the parish. The PPC works with other groups in the Parish including the Liturgy, Property, and Finance committees. Unfortunately, some PPC members (Sr. Marie Therese, Rick Mumford, Clara Fernandes, and Richard Perillo) have resigned due to health reasons, employment opportunities or relocating to another areas. Dave thanked each of them for their contributions and wished them well.

In December, the Parish farewelled Fr. Carlo Cruz and welcomed Fr. Rob Obrien. The PPC wished Fr. Carlo well for his future.

The review of the seismic report on the Church had been completed and after seeking advice, it was determined that the structure of the Church is safe and compliant at present. Meanwhile, the roof apparently has become watertight again after about 5 years of trying to get the roof repaired.

The following are the PPC goals for the year:

- To try to re-establish a youth group within the Parish. This has been missing for the last few years and it is a group that is very important for the Parish community.
- Appoint a safeguarding coordinator.
- Maintain a close relationship with Marist Primary and Marist College.
- Committee members to be more visible within the Parish.
- The recarpeting of the Church is a priority and the PPC is working to progress this.
- With next year marking the centenary of the Parish, the PPC will be looking to set up a committee to assist with making this a memorable occasion and invites those who would like to be part of this team to let the office know accordingly.

Finally, Dave thanked and expressed his appreciation to his fellow PPC committee members and to the many people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make sure that the functions of the Church and office run smoothly.

#### 4. Finance and Property Committee Reports – Dianne McArdle

Dianne reported the following Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2022:

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>
	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>	98727	132436
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Diocesan Allocation	11,161	10,612
Office	54,330	52,993
Liturgy	6,111	7,410
Foodbank	1,780	9,098
Property and Utilities	64,154	41,112
Vehicle	8,250	7,147
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<u>145,787</u>	<u>128,372</u>
Depreciation	29,287	28,476
<b>EXCESS INCOME</b>	175,075	156,848
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		
<b>OVER</b>		
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<u>-76,348</u>	<u>-24,412</u>

Dianne highlighted that the large figure of \$64,154 on the 'Property and Utilities' pertains to the painting of the Church. While the painting work happened in the previous year, the bill was paid in the end of January such that it falls into last year's expenses. A significant amount of time and money was spent on repairing the roof. In this regard, Dianne acknowledged Aaron and Dave Wood for the work they put in to make sure that the roof got repaired and did not have to be replaced because the chunk of money spent on the repairing it is nothing compared to what the Parish would have had spent to replace the whole roof.

The Jacob's Ladder has been moved such that the access way has been opened. The door to the confessional has also been done. Meanwhile, the photocopier had been replaced and that has brought down utility expenses of the office. The Tap and Go has been introduced resulting in an average income of \$100 a week. The plan to put an access ramp up to the altar has not yet happened because the layout of the Church is still being looked upon. The Food Bank figures went down because the money is being kept in a separate account such that it is not part of the overall money that comes through the Church.

Joe Brownfield asked regarding the budget for the future Youth Group whether it will be put under Liturgy. Dianne responded that there is still a Youth Group account sitting there untouched. The Finance committee would like to fund that separately like with the Food Bank to keep the money from being used elsewhere.

On the other hand, Ross Courtney raised a question about the seismic report on the Church. Dave replied that the PPC has revisited this again and got input from the Diocese and the Council as much as possible. Technically, there should be a notice saying that the Church building has a Class D-rating. It is about on the threshold or maybe just below, but the Council gives dispensation for about the

next 20 years for buildings that fall in that category. It may be something that needs revisiting in 10 years' time if this Church is still functional as it is or if it decided that any major works will be done.

Going back on Finance, Dianne reported that the Diocese has changed the bank account number of the Parish. This will not impact those who have been doing automatic payments, but only those who want to do one-off donations, in which case, the Parish office must be notified. Megan Williams added that this was due to the legislation regarding anti-money laundering.

As an additional report on Property, the committee is trying to do a kitchenette for Fr. Rob.

Dianne said that this would be her last Finance and Property Report as Fr. Rob has already accepted the resignation that she tendered. Dianne thanked those who helped her in the committee especially Megan Williams.

## **5. Caring Committee Report – Dianne McArdle**

For the Caring Committee, Dianne presented the following report:

- Still providing help to many more than the committee did before Covid arrived.
- Prior to going into lockdown, the committee was providing food to 31 people. Presently, food is provided to an average of 250 people per month.
- Assistance provided is no longer just food parcels. Cooked meals, clothing and household items are regularly asked for and provided by the extended community.
- Working regularly with Catholic Social Services, Plunket Nurses, Mental Health Nurses, ADHB Nurses, Parent Aid, and the local schools to assist whanau in need.
- With the NZ financial recession, the committee is looking to see if it can assist families in new ways. The committee recognizes that the way forward is to help make life changes for whanau and this can often be through education. As such, the committee is looking at ways to help the schools.
- Dianne extended her thanks to those who help in so many ways. Special mention was made to Darren, Paul, Charlie, Nerissa, Megan, Johanna, Antonia, Owen, John, Boston Bakery, Marist College, Marist School, Ferndale Kindergarten, the drivers, amazing cooks, and all those who provide food items or financial support and those who offer prayers for the committee's mission.

After the report, Roland Monteiro asked Dianne as to what her involvement will be considering that she already resigned from the Property and Finance committees. Dianne responded that this is yet to be discussed between her and Fr. Rob as she has just tendered her resignation during the last Finance committee meeting. Roland then asked Dianne as to who appointed her and for how long. Dianne replied that she was appointed by the Parish Priest which is the normal procedure for the Finance committee. Dave Wood then asked Roland what the purpose for this question is. Roland said that he has not seen that in any minutes of any meeting. Roland added that he is quite involved with the Parish, that he used to get the Minutes of the monthly meetings and that has stopped, nor he got any on his emails. Dave said that it is hard for the Parish office to send them out individually. Dave then asked Roland if he has asked the office and he should check the Parish website for the Minutes. Roland answered that he has not seen any Minutes on the Notice Board and that as per his most recent checking at 7:00 am in the morning, the last Minutes on the Parish website pertained to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2022 meeting. Dave asked Roland why he did not bring it immediately to the PPC's attention and he should not have waited until the AGM. Roland responded that as professional volunteers, the PPC members are basically doing nothing. Joe Brownfield then told Roland that his statement seems not fair and that he needs to stop. Joe added that the PPC members were doing a

lot and that he knows this because he has been part of the PPC, the Youth Group, and the Music Group for years. Joe expressed his nonappreciation for the way Roland is questioning the PPC members and if he really wants to have the Minutes, there is the office next door where he could ask for them. Roland responded that the Minutes should be available on the Parish website at least. Joe answered that somebody may have made a mistake, but not these people. Roland said that as professionals, they need to step down if they cannot perform. Most of the attendees simultaneously responded by emphasizing the word 'volunteers' to Roland. The atmosphere was a bit tense. At that juncture, Dave thanked Roland for bringing the matter about the Minutes to the attention of the PPC and appropriate action will be taken to address this.

## **6. Liturgy Committee Report – Phil Marshall**

Phil reported that for the past 4 months the Parish is still recovering from the pandemic. The committee is trying to reinvigorate the Mass, the Liturgy and community activities, such as the morning teas. At the end of last year and early this year, the committee farewelled Fr. Carlo and welcomed Fr. Rob. The things that the committee has worked on include the following: training of new members for the Ministers of the Word and Eucharist as well as new Altar Servers. Phil noted that there is a desperate need for more Ministers for the 5:30 pm Mass. Meanwhile, committee has established the children's Liturgy and continued the morning teas after the 10:00 am Mass. Phil said that this appears to be successful in getting people together. It is their aim to try and build that community as this usually starts with shared experience, getting to know each other, and then building from that. Throughout the year, the committee works on what the next feast day is and what it needs to be done from the preparation standpoint more particularly around Easter which is busy in terms of trying to get people into the moment and understanding what Easter all is about and what Jesus did for us. The other thing is the various ecumenical activities, the notable examples of which include the World Day of Prayer, Stations of the Cross. Phil added that as a committee, they are eager to enrich the Liturgy. They got ideas for the next 12 months and for the future to try and keep moving forward to that and the committee welcomes other ideas too. Finally, Phil thanked those who had extended help to the Parish in this regard.

## **7. Marist Primary School Report – Sheila White**

On behalf of Carolynn Phillips, Principal of Marist School, Sheila White reported that they are grateful to Fr. Rob for his involvement with the school. He is accommodating and every Wednesday visits the children and joins them for morning tea. Fr. Rob is also a member of the Special Character committee. After their community evening and further discussions, they have initiated 'Wonderings About Our Catholic Faith' boxes in the Church and School foyers. As of yet, they have no 'wonderings.' It is their aim to support Adult Faith Formation across the community whether it be exploring their understanding about the parts of the Mass, the gospels, Māori spirituality, prayer life and the like. The school is looking forward to having more opportunities where they can continue to work with Fr. Rob and the parish.

The school thanked the community volunteers whether it be as a coach or manager of a sports team, grandparent or parent helper within hubs, with swimming supervision, by providing transport, being a marshal, making Marist Meals, providing food for the foodbank, reading to children or volunteering to Garden to Table.

The school is excited to announce that the Hall Renovation will begin in the school holidays. Last year, the community raised \$50,000 towards this project and all fundraisers this year continue to add to this pool. They are looking forward to seeing the finished project by the end of term 3 or early term 4. The hall will become a community hub with a much-needed face lift internally, the opening

up of the kitchen to dining area and the large sliding doors and deck opening up onto the main courtyard. It will also be able to be used for parish gatherings e.g., after funerals.

The Garden to Table programme is flourishing at Marist School but they desperately need more volunteers. Those who have an interest in gardening or cooking or just working with children are encouraged to get in touch with the school.

One of the Year 6 students has initiated *Marist Meals with love from Marist Kids*. The Year 6 children after Garden to Table give up their lunchtime to make meals for those in need within the community. The school continues to support the parish with the foodbank and other needs.

## **8. Parish Priest Report – Fr. Rob O’Brien**

Fr. Rob extended his thanks to the PPC and the various committees for their hard work. It is a great outreach to the community, and it is important to live our faith out. Fr. Rob said that before he came to the Parish, he knew as a member of the Bishop’s Consultors committee that the carpet at St Mary’s Church needs fixing. Fr. Rob added that while there was a talk about handrails and access ramps, he said that he had a talk with Ross Courtney, and they had the opinion that the Altar stairs are too high and they would need rebuilding.

Meanwhile, Fr. Rob said that whenever he gets a Priest to come in the Church and have a look, the first thing that the Priest would ask is where the tabernacle has gone to? Fr. Rob believes that as a Catholic Church, it is important that the tabernacle is visible. Talking about passing on the faith to our children, when they come here, they do not genuflect which is supposed to be a simple Catholic thing to do, which is acknowledging the presence of Christ in our Church. Fr. Rob added that until one who enters the Church sees Our Lady or get closer to the Stations of the Cross it is quite not clear whether this is a Catholic Church. But when you see the tabernacle, then you know exactly where you are. Fr. Rob welcomes the people to have their feedback and share their views on that.

Regarding the Church layout, Fr. Rob said that we could probably do better with a hybrid sort of format with some pews on the sides or some individual chairs with more flexibility or may curve out those on the front. These are options that can be experimented so that a decision can be made before putting the carpet down. According to Fr. Rob, it would be nice to have it all done by Christmas. Fr. Rob sought the attendees’ thoughts in this regard.

Ross Courtney then expressed his views. He understood the problems on the stairs because right from the very beginning, pointed out to the architect that they were quite inappropriate and dangerous. Meanwhile, Ross further commented that the blank space in middle came from the idea of Fr. Vercoe. Ross said that he had been working in churches around Auckland for years and everybody would often say that St Mary’s Mt Albert is a strange Church. Most churches in Auckland has the Blessed Sacrament in a visible place, and it works wonderfully as the people could all see visibly, throughout their whole time in Church, the presence of the Lord. Thus, Ross believes the prudent thing to do is to work back towards having an arrangement where it does make sense. Fr. Rob thanked Ross for his comment and stressed that the tabernacle should a visible presence within the church.

Phil Marshall meanwhile added that there is a certain unity that is important within the Church. The faithful pray in a unified manner and part of that unity needs consistency with what other Parishes do and what the Vatican recommends. Phil agreed that we he first notices inside the Church is “Where is the tabernacle?”. And with the Sacramental Programme, Paul said that he feels like a pied piper, bringing them in and showing them where it is, and they do not know. So, the Blessed

Sacrament should be in the center. Phil also added some comment on the standing that in the East, they also do it but for a different reason. He encourages people to read Pope Benedict's Book on Liturgies (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*) as it is really interesting. It all comes back to that unity for doing things.

Lovlin Franswah commented that the feedback made by Phil and Ross are relevant today. The focus should be on the Eucharist such that instead of facing each other, we need to face the Eucharist. Fr. Rob agreed citing the whole 4 presence of Christ according to Vatican II: the Word, the Eucharist, the Priest, the People. Among which, the Eucharist is supreme presence of Christ.

Jim Howley then expressed his thoughts on the matter. He said that there are 3 issues that need to be discussed separately: the stairs, a visible tabernacle, and the changing the whole Church around, which the latter, according to him, is the major issue. Jim claimed that the greatest theologian that the Church has produced was St. Thomas Aquinas, and that St Thomas taught that the real presence of Jesus is in the Christian community. If we turn our back on everybody in the Church, we are refusing to follow a Christian community. We celebrate the Eucharist a Christian community. The Priest is the representative, but the whole congregation is celebrating. We need to be able to see each other as a community. Jim said that when he sits in his seat and look across the Church, he becomes community by seeing the whole people around him that he had known for years. To him, it would be a desecration of this Church to change its route because the design requires that we retain what we got. He believes that the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist are central to our life. So, it makes absolute good sense that they should be central in our Church. That would have been behind the thinking of Fr. Vercoe and the others who created the Church as it is. Fr Rob clarified that the Priest is there in persona Christi and in persona Ecclesiae at the same time. Jim then requested if the 3 issues can be separated because for him, the one is major while the others are necessary. Joe Brownfield said that he totally agrees with the tabernacle being visible, for the stairs to being safe, but there are several people that do not like being facing each other. Yvonne Sang added that when you sit in the Church, you might not know their names, but when you go to the supermarket, you got another acquaintance being you can see their face. This is that sense of community because we know each other by face as we see half the community at a time. Yvonne further commented about the kneelers that they were taken out. While she was not present when they changed the Church, she said that the committee spent months and put the pews in different arrangements, and this is the best that they could put up although not perfect. Fr. Rob said that there is no perfect solution to it. The Church has changed a lot in 30 years since Vatican II. There is a totally different demographic now. Yvonne said that we need to think ahead, there are 2 schools attached to us, and we need the Church. It is hard to get a universal approval as we cannot please everybody. Lovlin said that in Auckland Diocese, the people face the Priest. They are not facing each other. This is happening in every other Church except at St. Mary's. Fr. Rob said that we need to find a solution to progress. Emma Edge commented that the issue on the Church layout must be put into context as to what might happen in the future because looking into last year's Minutes there was a similar discussion on the topic and there had been strong feelings either way. Fr. Rob said that should there be any re-layout, he would open to being flexible and preserve some of the elements present and past. The narrow footprint of the church is limiting to some layout designs.

Dave thanked Fr Rob for his input. Dave then added that this matter has been bouncing around for several years now. The PPC has sought advice from the Bishop, various Monsignors, and Liturgical committee in the Diocese. There is no perfect answer, and it would be impossible to please everyone. But it is important to consider the feedback coming from the parishioners before any final decision is taken.

Lastly, Fr. Rob is looking forward to celebrating the centenary of the Parish by next year.

## **9. General Business**

Kath Faughey commented that the advertising of this year's AGM was under the radar. This point was taken by David. Megan added that it was quite difficult to set the date of the AGM taking into account the recent Sacramental Programme.

Once again, Dave further noted Roland's concerns and Dave will email to him the monthly Minutes. Dave acknowledged that Roland had raised it before and Dave thought that it has been done, but it was not. Dave expressed his apologies, and he will do it himself just to get it done. Dave explained that the office has a lot of other things to do, which could have been the reason why the Minutes were not consistently being published. Dave will also see to it that the Minutes will be regularly uploaded on the Parish website.

Meanwhile, Emma Edge expressed her gratitude for all PPC members. According to her, being a volunteer herself in numerous organisations, she knows that it is not easy because you have to do it on top of everything else that you have got on your lives. Hence, she really appreciates the efforts of the PPC members.

Finally, Fr. Rob shared that Johanna is having trouble with rostering volunteers in the 5:30 pm Mass so he is looking for the possibility of having a Saturday vigil instead of the Sunday one. Yvonne Sang commented that the idea of the Sunday Mass is intended to cater the transient community who come because it is the last Mass in the area. Honorine Franswah added that it is important to have a Sunday evening Mass because every Church has a Saturday Mass. The reason why there is not many volunteers because it is not a regular congregation. This was noted by Fr. Rob and will see how it goes.

**10. Closing Prayer** – The meeting ended at 12:09 pm with a closing prayer led by Fr. Rob.