

Parish Advisory Council Report 2021

After the challenges posed during 2020, it is true to say that we began 2021 with hope that the difficulties posed by the pandemic might be behind us. Such was not to be and so in the *new normal* of lockdowns and restrictions, our focus in 2021 has continued on being church for one another however we can.

We had determined that 2021 would be a *Year of Prayer* and we have provided varying prayer stimuli throughout the liturgical year which began and ended with a Taizé style liturgy. The characteristic of Taizé worship that is most prevalent is the use of repetitive prayer set to simple musical lines. We are certainly blessed in our community with our musicians who are so committed to enriching our worship. This was certainly true of the Taizé experiences.

During our Lenten liturgies we sought and shared responses to questions about prayer – how do I pray, where do I pray, what supports my prayer. Greg Sunter presented a session to the community which was well received and the Year 2 children from the school decorated the church with images of prayer. In April, as Easter people, our focus was on transformation. In the Marian months of May and October we prayed through the intercession of Mary and looked at the rosary in a contemporary context. May was also a month of celebration as we welcomed Father Matthew as a newly ordained priest.

During July our prayer focus was on Carmelite spirituality and charism: – Prayer, Community and Service. The Parish Feast Day celebrations were curtailed by COVID restrictions but with prayer chains from students, a video of the school choir, the presence of Lay Carmelites and Carmelites and good cheer made for a good weekend. Prayer has many forms! At this time there was also a very successful fund raising campaign for our friends in Timor Leste with a presentation from the Friends of Zumalai Thank you for your continuing generosity in supporting the Carmelite work there.

In the latter part of the year we have remembered members of our community who have now relocated and in November we have focussed on remembrance of those who have died.

Because of uncertainty with gathering, we have postponed Ministry Sunday until February 2022. At this time we will also launch our *Year of Community*. We encourage you to consider what we value in the community, where are the gaps, what can we do as a parish and individual to build community. This will be our first Carmel Conversation of 2022 and we hope to have more during the year. Please claim the date, Sunday 27 February 9.30 – 12.00 and give some thought to ways in which we can build community here at Mt. Carmel and ways in which you might be involved.

During the year, Evangelisation Brisbane conducted the Catholic Leadership Intensive which was attended by Father Matthew, and parishioners Christine Wilson, and Sam Hill. The course will be held again in 2022 and we will once again sponsor three places. Stay tuned for further information if you are interested in attending.

The Parish Advisory Council appreciated the involvement of members of the school leadership team at our meetings during the year and the opportunities this provided for closer connections.

We also engaged in some formation and succession planning with Bishop Bill Morris during the year. Three foundation and highly valued members of the Council, John Kelly, Libby Lyons and Madeleine Sayer will step down this year and after careful discernment Michael Kearney, Paul Jensen and Cara Fox have accepted Father Martinho's invitation to join. The new look Council will be introduced to the community early in 2022.

As a group we considered the discussions and directions of the first Plenary assembly. We continued to support Carmel Care's Meal Train outreach and Carmel Place. Whilst Sydney was in its long lockdown, the school made outreach to Our Lady of Mt Carmel School in Wentworthville with offers of connection and support.

To further support online initiatives we have developed a part time digital support role which will be advanced in the new year. Our online bulletin continues to be well received.

We continue to discern and seek feedback in developing strategies to nourish and enrich the ways in which we support the Carmelite charism through opportunities for prayer, community, and service, now and into the future. We are always interested to hear from you and would be particularly keen to hear any ideas you have for our *Year of Community* in 2022. Contact can be made by email to the parish office mtcarmel@bne.catholic.net.au