



Holy Family Parish Pastoral Council

Review of Parish Life September 2022 – June 2023

Introduction

Holy Family Parish Pastoral Council was formed in 1991. Its purpose is, as a representative of the parish community, to work co-responsibly with the clergy of the parish to build and promote a vibrant Christian community.

The aims of the Pastoral Council are to:

- Build a community of faith and worship
- Support the Domestic Church
- Pass on the faith to children and young people
- Help maintain and develop a welcoming parish
- Plan and support parish mission
- Empower and support parish laity

(For more detailed information, please refer to the parish website: www.holy-familyparish.com)

The current Pastoral Council was reconstituted in September 2022 by Father Michael Spence shortly after his appointment as Parish Priest.

Membership of the Pastoral Council for the year 2022-2023:

Fr Michael Spence PP (President)	Fr Robert Sloan CC	Deacon Brendan Dowd
Elaine McEntee (Chairperson)	Lisa O’Kane (Secretary)	John Byrne
Bernadette Cunningham	Conor Mackey	Sean Maguire
Stephen McCormick	Martin McGranaghan	Mairead Walsh

The Pastoral Council meets monthly between September and June. An important focus at each meeting is prayer, calling on the Holy Spirit to help the members to listen, discern and be guided in bringing ‘faith, hope and love in abundance to meet the challenges before them and to fulfil the Church’s mission of proclaiming to the world, God’s love and salvation in Jesus Christ’.

(A Prayer for the Synodal Pathway)

Reflections on the Year 2022 - 2023

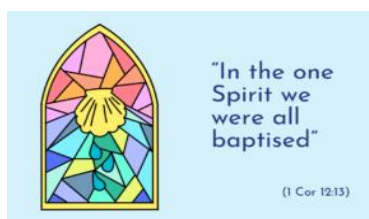
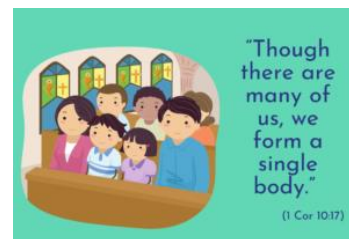
The disruption and restrictions as a result of the COVID pandemic had a devastating effect on parish life. Thankfully, with the easing of restrictions during 2022, many activities were resumed, but it was never going to be a case of picking up where we left off in 2020. With this in mind, and in line with the Diocesan Pathways to the Future Initiative and in the spirit of the Universal Church Synod, the Pastoral Council’s overall focus of the Pastoral Plan for 2022 – 2023 was the renewal and rejuvenation of parish life through dialogue, encouragement and support.



This report gives an overview of the work of the Pastoral Council and the life of the parish over the past year - as can be seen, despite the challenges of emerging from a pandemic, community life has once again flourished and grown thanks to the hard work and dedication of our many wonderful volunteers to whom we are so grateful.

Building a praying community – Faith and Worship

- It was with great joy and enthusiasm that the Children's Liturgy was re-introduced at the 10.30 a.m. Sunday Mass in Holy Family Church and was marked with the commissioning of all the leaders.
- Pupils from Holy Family and St. Thérèse primary schools resumed their active involvement in the weekday Masses in both churches.
- Taize Prayer Around the Cross, held on the first Friday of each month, also resumed in September 2022 and continues to be a very prayerful service.
- First Saturday Devotions resumed in Holy Family Church on the First Saturday of each month.
- The weekly Pilgrim Prayer session on Facebook Live, led by Deacon Brendan Dowd, was unaffected by Covid and it continues to be a prayerful support and link to the parish community, particularly to those isolated in their own homes.
- A celebration of Mass on two evenings in November to remember parishioners who had died in the previous year was a very moving occasion and greatly appreciated by all who attended.
- On the Third Sunday of Advent – Bambinelli Sunday – the parish re-introduced the blessing of the figurines of the baby Jesus, brought to Mass by the children. A prayer card and a small present bag in which to place the baby Jesus were available for each family to take home.
- A Christmas prayer resource, prepared by Northern Pastoral Network – Twelve Days of Christmas – was made available to assist in scripture reflection and prayer and both Holy Family and St Thérèse primary schools resumed their Carol Services which were warmly welcomed by all who attended.



- In January 2023, the Welcome Group were once again able to hold the annual Celebration for the Newly Baptised in Holy Family Church, having moved online for the previous two years.
- During Lent, Morning Prayer was said before the weekday Masses and Stations of the Cross was celebrated each Friday in both churches. Lectio Divina was also held during Lent.
- On Good Friday, Stations of the Cross was led by members of the Parish Scout and Guide Units. This was a very prayerful experience, enhanced by music from the parish Folk Groups and our young people read the reflections with such dignity and sincerity.
- In April, the Pastoral Council organised a Youth Mass in Holy Family Church with active involvement by members of the parish Girl Guide Unit, Scout Unit and Youth Club. Prayers were offered for those preparing for exams and an Exam Candle lit. Many of the youth of the Parish and their families attended on this occasion.
- During May the rosary was recited each morning before Mass and this practice has continued one morning each week in both churches, led by members of the laity, reflecting the collaboration that we as baptised children of God are called to undertake to build and renew the Church.
- An icon of the Mother of Perpetual Succour was erected in Holy Family Church and the first Wednesday Novena Mass in the Parish was celebrated in May by Fr. Burns CSsR, Rector of Clonard Monastery. The Novena Mass continues weekly.
- An icon of the Holy Family, donated by Bishop Walsh to the Parish, was erected in St Thérèse Church above the Baptismal Font and a new candelabrum was also installed.
- Commissioning of members of all the liturgical ministries took place during the year and Ministers of the Word and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion were given the opportunity to attend a Day of Reflection in Holy Rosary Parish Centre, facilitated by Living Church.
- A screen was installed in both churches to support the singing of the hymns during Mass and liturgical services and they continue to be a very helpful support, particularly to on-line viewers.

Building a caring community – welcome, hospitality and outreach

- The Hospitality & Welcome Group, Pastoral Council and Newington Day Centre organised a very successful and enjoyable 'Welcome Back' hospitality event which took place on the second weekend of September in St Thérèse Church after the two Sunday Masses. This was also an opportunity for Fr. Spence and Fr. Sloan to get to know their new parishioners given their recent appointment to the parish.



- Another joyful occasion took place shortly afterwards when the community came together in large numbers to celebrate the service, dedication and commitment of Fr. Strain and Fr. Morely during their time in the Parish. The parishioners had the opportunity to express their thanks personally and to present them with a gift while enjoying wonderful hospitality and being entertained by some of our parish musicians.
- A collection of non-perishable foodstuffs took place at Masses on Harvest Sunday to coincide with the Season of Creation and was donated to local foodbanks.
- In the spirit of the ongoing Universal Synodal process of listening and dialogue, the Pastoral Council invited representatives from all our parish groups to a Parish Conversation Evening. This was a great opportunity for meeting together and becoming more aware of the work of the groups. It was also an opportunity for the Pastoral Council to build relationships with the groups and to learn about some of the issues and support that they might need. During the year the Council addressed many of these issues and will continue to do so in the year ahead.
- The Parish Christmas Fair took place at the start of December and was enjoyed by young and old alike with many great prizes on offer.
- The SVP Annual Appeal took place at Christmas and was very well supported by parishioners.
- Poinsettia displays, provided by families in memory of loved ones, added greatly to the decoration of both churches for Christmas and was a source of comfort to the bereaved.
- To mark the 'World Day of the Sick', the Pastoral Council produced a special greeting card which was delivered to the residents in the Nursing Homes within our Parish and to sick and housebound parishioners.
- St Patrick's Day was marked by the organisation of refreshments and traditional music in Holy Family Church by the Hospitality & Welcome Group. This was well attended and created a lovely sense of community. Refreshments were also served after Mass on Mothering Sunday.
- The Developing World Group hosted several hospitality events and the sale of Fair Trade goods and Trócaire Gifts in Holy Family Gathering Space after Masses during the year in support of the Trócaire Christmas and Lenten Campaigns and the Twezimbe Centre, Uganda.
- After the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Masses, small bottles of holy water and prayer cards were distributed to the congregation and also delivered to the sick and housebound.
- On Sunday 25th June, a Community Fun Day was organised by Newington Day Centre, the Hospitality & Welcome Group and the Pastoral Council in Holy Family Church grounds to celebrate the end of the academic year and the beginning of the summer holidays. The invitation and welcome was extended to all our local community - this was a hugely successful and enjoyable event, despite the weather, and appreciated by all who attended. Many thanks to the Youth Club for hosting the event indoors at short notice.
- During the year the Parish, supported by the Hospitality & Welcome Group, had the privilege of hosting celebrations to mark the publications of – 'Beauty Through Broken Windows' and 'Sister

Patricia Maria Speight – Bringing God’s Love and Hope to People in the Margins’ authored by our parishioner, Dr Aidan Donaldson.

- The *Faith Friends* initiative between P7 pupils in St Thérèse Primary School and students from Blessed Trinity College was a blessed experience for all involved and a blessing for the whole parish. Many thanks to all involved.

Communication:

- The introduction of a new Parish Bulletin format, that included the Sunday Mass readings, was warmly received as it included explanations and reflections of the sacred scripture each week.
- Communication and staying connected with the parish community remains a priority for the Pastoral Council. The parish website continues to play a vital role in providing key information and the broadcasting of Masses and services for the sick and housebound. Many improvements and updates took place throughout the year and work is ongoing.
- The Communication Team continue to share information regularly on the parish Facebook page.

Diocesan Events: Pathways to the Future Initiative

- ‘Pathways to the Future’ is a Diocesan initiative that explores how we can best respond to the practical challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in this time of transformation and change. Members of the Pastoral Council attended events held across the Diocese organised by the Pathways to the Future Steering Committee and have provided submissions and insights into parish issues and priorities, including the recording of data on Mass attendance and aspects of the Sunday Liturgy.
- To help promote the Pathways to the Future initiative, which is due to be publicly launched in the autumn, a preparatory awareness raising programme was communicated to parishioners with Bishop Donal’s Pastoral Letter, bulletin inserts, prayer cards, prayers of the faithful and key messages included in homilies.
- A number of parishioners participated in the Lay Lead Funeral Ministry Training. This new ministry will be piloted in the autumn and again reflects the call by God for all of us to share in the life of the Church for God’s greater glory and for the salvation of the world.



Pastoral Council Annual Day of Reflection

The annual day of reflection and discernment in Drumalis Retreat Centre took place in June and was facilitated by Fr. Tom Layden SJ. The main focus was on the Synodal model of working in the context of both the ongoing Universal Synod and the Diocesan’s Pathways to the Future initiative in preparation for the launch of the programme and we also identified some priorities for the Pastoral Council to consider over the next year.

Thank You

Our parish is incredibly blessed to have so many active voluntary groups and ministries. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our dedicated volunteers whose generous faith-inspired service brings to life our parish mission statement – ‘a praying, caring community centred in Christ.’

Thank you for taking the time to read this report – if you wish to make any suggestions or would like any further information, please do not hesitate to speak to one of our members or contact the Parish Office. Finally, we wish God’s blessings for and you families for the forthcoming year.

Holy Family Pastoral Council

