

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON SUNDAY, 2 June 2019, AT 10.00AM

Attendees:

Fr Jerald Mariadas, David Ng, Cheryl Tay, Kevin Smith, Greg Sleeth, Marie Cameron, Bernard Ferre, Monica Chai, Frank Smit, Madge Martin, Harry Martin, Bernadette O'Hanlon, Paul O'Hanlon, Verna Carter, Dale Gordon-Stewart, John Mirams, Muriel O'Gorman, Frank Burke, Estelle Pratt, Martin Harris, Ravi Kamath, Michael Liddy, Bernadette Selleck, Dawn Pratley, Vicente Belmonte, Noel Spinks, Anna Fabris

1) Welcome and Opening Prayer

David welcomed parishioners to the AGM and Fr Jerald led the opening prayer.

2) Apologies

Chrysostom Gunanayagam, Michael Pennefather, Patricia Vandekolk

3) Confirmation of Minutes 2018 AGM

Harry highlighted an error in the minutes in relation to Murray Valley Resort – that the parish had two weeks accommodation, not three. With no further amendments, the minutes of meeting for AGM 2018 were confirmed with Frank S as mover and Harry seconder.

4) Business Arising

There were no business arising.

5) Correspondence

There was no correspondence raised.

6) Parish Priest Report

Fr Jerald thanked all parishioners for their support, noting it was his fifth year with the parish. He specially thanked all who were involved in the liturgical ministries, outreach ministries, the parish leadership team, parish office volunteers and school staff for their contributions.

Fr Jerald noted that the congregation adjusted well to the change in mass time to 11.15am. He thanked everyone for making adjustments in their own way and shared that he now longer needed to rush from parish to parish after mass.

Jerald highlighted that the Archdiocese has encouraged all parishes to put child safety policies in place. The parish had developed a draft policy. However, as the Archdiocese was currently reviewing their policy, which would have taken into consideration recent legislative amendments, the parish would be holding its release of the documents to ensure they were in line with the Archdiocese amended policy documents.

In relation to Plenary Council 2020, Fr Jerald shared that different parishes organised Listening and Dialogue sessions in different ways. Our parish arranged two sessions and encouraged individuals who attended those sessions to submit their individual response to the council. Following that 34 parishes came together to put together a joint statement to the Plenary Council. Frank B was our parish representative.

Looking to the future, Fr Jerald shared that the parish will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2020. Special celebration plans, such as reunion of past parishioners and students, would be looked into. Fr Jerald also noted the increasing number of new apartments in the area and the need to reach out to these new families and welcome them into the parish through mail drop of brochures of parish activities.

7) School Report

In the absence of Patricia, Fr Jerald shared that Patricia has been working hard to increase enrolment while facing strong competition from government funded schools in the area. The school, together with Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM), were looking at strategies to increase enrolment. Current enrolment stood at below a hundred, with 13 children enrolled for prep in 2020.

Ravi shared his observation that some staff had been at the school for a very long time, and asked if there were plans to recognise them for their service to the school. Fr Jerald replied that it would be looked into. Ravi then asked how enrolment at the school stacked up to that at Our Lady of the Pines (OLOP). Fr Jerald replied that OLOP, like most Catholic schools in the area, faced similar enrolment challenges, with numbers dropping from 420 to 370 this year and lower numbers in 2020.

Harry noted that with the decrease in enrolment, the school would struggle financially. Fr Jerald agreed with Harry's assessment and shared that CEM would consider all available options should enrolment drop below 60. Bernard opined that the parish should make the decision ahead of time to merge with OLOP rather than to let it happen. In response David raised that current families may not all move to OLOP. Ravi viewed that as long as the school was able to break even, that would be reason enough to keep it going. Fr Jerald emphasised that there were currently no plans to merge the schools, and cautioned against spreading such word around as it would result in more families pulling their children out.

Muriel queried the reasons behind the decrease in enrolment and questioned if there was anything the parish and school could do to boost enrolment. Fr Jerald shared

that three years ago, a sizeable number of students left the school which resulted in current low enrolment numbers. This resulted in more families pulling their children out of the school as they were concerned with the effect of small pool of friendship groups on their children. In addition, government schools in the area introduced different syllabus such as IB program that were attractive to families.

Frank B raised that the school and parish should consider how to differentiate itself from government schools to make it attractive to prospective families. David took the point on board and would pass that on to Patricia.

8) Pastoral Council Report

David shared that he considered stepping down as chair of the PPC but decided to stay on till the next AGM after much prayer and reflection. He highlighted that the next AGM will be held in March 2020, for accounts to be prepared following the end of financial year in December.

He shared highlights for the year as follows:

- A youth group was formed in the parish
- Afternoon tea was organized for families who had their child baptised at the parish during the year
- Website has been updated
- Joint PPC meeting with OLOP to coordinate issues
- Plenary council listening and dialogue sessions were organized with parishioners encouraged to submit their individual response

In terms of future plans for the parish, David shared that the PPC would be looking to:

- Form a committee to plan for the parish 60th anniversary celebrations
- Organise a parish mission with growth of the parish as a main objective
- Conduct stewardship program and parish census
- Seek a parish representative to sit on the interfaith council

David noted that the future of the PPC was a big concern and the parish would need to seek ways to encourage new and younger members to join the council.

In closing, David thanked everyone and asked for prayers that more will stand up and volunteer to join the PPC.

9) Finance Committee Report

Frank S handed out the parish balance sheet, noting it had been left out of the AGM report. He reported that the parish operating budget for the year was in surplus of \$5,000. However, any capital works would have to be paid from reserves which stood at \$452,000 at present. He shared that a stewardship campaign would be held in September to try and ensure the parish do not have to dip into its reserves unnecessarily.

Ravi remarked that it would be good to have some breakdown of items included in general expense, and that the numbers did not add up.

Bernard replied that pastoral expense of \$2,470 was missing from the statement and the numbers would tally after that was factored in. Frank S promised to amend and make available the amended statement.

Muriel commented that the new cleaners had done a fantastic job keeping the church clean. She highlighted that at the AGM in 2018, she had raised that the chairs in the narthex should be upholstered as they were looking old and tired, and queried if that had been looked into. Frank S replied that it had yet to be looked into and he would do that this year.

John queried why there was a budget for printing in 2018 and not in 2019. Frank S replied that was a special printing expense for the stewardship campaign. In-house printing was captured in another category.

Bernadette O asked if lights could be placed at the steps near the presbytery as that area got quite dark especially during winter, and it could be dangerous for older parishioners, especially those walking from Catholic Care homes down the street. Fr Jerald replied that was being looked into already.

Harry questioned if the increase in payroll expense was sustainable as the pastoral worker salary was now fully borne by the parish. Estelle commented the pastoral worker was essential to the parish and ways would have to be explored to support the increased expense. Frank S replied that as the current budget was running close to break even, stewardship would have to be raised to ensure the increased expense would be adequately covered.

Frank B commented that it was important for the stewardship program to not solely focus on finance but also on the meaningful activities that parishioners can respond to and engage in. Frank S responded that the parish need to be upfront about seeking funds with the program but that it could run alongside the parish mission that could focus on provision of meaningful activities for parishioners. In response to Muriel's question of how long since the last stewardship program, Frank S replied that it had been three years.

10) Matters Arising from Ministries

David said that the catechetic report had missed omitted in the AGM report. He shared that 18 children from the parish and school had been recently confirmed by Msgr Ireland. Classes for Sacrament of Reconciliation would be held later in the year and those children would go on to for Sacrament of Holy Communion next year. He had also recruited volunteers to help with catechetical classes including RCIA. Rose Paynting would also still be assisting with RCIA.

Bernard commented that an article had been left out in his report, and he proceeded to share excerpts of the article that related to welcoming of new members to the parish. Monica highlighted the need to obtain the contact details of new members to outreach to them thereafter. Ravi also suggested including a welcome of new families in the parish newsletter.

11) Q & A

There were no questions raised.

12) General Business

1 in 100 Appeal

Harry thanked everyone for their support of the 1 in 100 appeal. He shared that Sr Trudy was recovering well and would be returning to Palestine soon.

Vinnies

Muriel thanked parishioners for their contributions and shared that the Vinnies cupboard was still in need of groceries to help the needy.

Murray Valley Resort @Yarrawonga

Harry highlighted that the annual fee for the parish timeshare accommodation at Murray Valley Resort @Yarrawonga was due soon. That provided 2 weeks of accommodation, and the parish could pay an additional \$150 to increase that to 3 weeks. He advocated continuing with annual subscription.

Commentators at mass

Paul opined that commentators at mass should commentate on announcements rather than read off the run sheet word for word.

General

Frank B shared that the parish should focus on the positive areas highlighted in the AGM report and all it had achieved in the past year.

13) Closing

David and Fr Jerald thanked everyone for their participation, noting that the parish would need to walk forward in faith. Fr Jerald led the closing prayer, and the AGM was officially closed at 11.05am.

Minutes by Cheryl Tay

Reviewed by Fr Jerald Mariadas and David Ng (PPC Chair)