

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON SUNDAY, 3 JULY 2022, AT 12.30PM IN CHURCH

Attendees:

Fr Jerald Mariadas, Cheryl Tay, Frank Smit, Tony Nigro, Carmel Nigro, Nicole Morabito, Patrick Soosay, Christina Soosay, Rose Paynting, Pat Cater, Gerda Van der Peet, Vic Belmonte, Muriel O’Gorman, Michael Liddy, Cynthia Blundell, Dale Gordon-Stewart, Ron Gration, Barbara Gration, Chrysostom Gunanayagam, Monica Chai, Estelle Pratt, George Cooper, Bernadette O’Hanlon, Paul O’Hanlon, Kenneth Ting, Ravi Kamath, Sheryl Kamath, Sharon Yeo, Shelaani Sivananthan, Bernadette Selleck, Mario Faraci, Alexander Grabkowski, Amor Grabkowski, Paul O’Connor, Pauline Smit, Henry Gatt, Maureen Morris, Bernard Ferre, Greg Sleeth, John Mirams, Alex Kok

1) Welcome and Opening Prayer

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

2) Apologies

David Ng, Trish Vandekolk, Harry Martin

3) Confirmation of Minutes 2021 AGM

The minutes of meeting for AGM 2021 was confirmed with Cynthia Blundell as mover and Vic Belmonte as seconder.

4) Business Arising

There were no business arising.

5) Correspondence

There was no correspondence raised.

6) Parish Priest Report

Fr Jerald thanked everyone for their support throughout the year, especially volunteers, ministry leaders and parish staff, and provided an overview of the activities and spiritual nourishment provided to parishioners over the past year.

In relation to the Mission plan initiated by the Archdiocese, Fr Jerald shared that the Doncaster Mission is envisioned by the Archdiocese to comprise St Gregory’s (Doncaster), St Kevin’s (Templestowe), Ss Peter and Paul’s (Doncaster East), Our Lady of the Pines

(Donvale), and St Clem of Rome (Bulleen). The Archdiocese has encouraged parishes to come together to form the mission at their desired pace.

Fr Jerald noted that none of the communications provided by the Archdiocese focused on what it meant to be a mission. He also shared that parishes with priests retiring are not being provided with a new parish priest. Instead, the parish priest of the neighbouring parish is being asked to take on that parish, Eg. Fr Dispin of St John's Mitcham was asked to take on Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Ringwood). He added that the parish priest of St Clem of Rome (Bulleen) will be retiring at the end of Jan 2023, and it remained to be seen whether a new parish priest will be appointed.

Fr Jerald opined that our parish need to discuss and note down in writing how we envision the mission to work, so as to be able to put that forward to the Archdiocese when the need / occasion arises.

During the forum discussion, Fr Jerald shared that many parishes have reflected back to the Archdiocese that they preferred to work together as joint parishes, rather than a large mission. This was also his preferred model, ie. status quo, and he had shared this sentiment with Fr Charles (PP of St Gregory & St Kevin).

Forum:

Vic Belmonte asked for a visualisation of how this Mission model will work. **Fr Jerald** provided the example of Bayside mission where five to eight parishes came together with two active priests and a retired priest to support masses.

Sheryl Kamath followed up with the question of whether two active priests are sufficient to cover all the needs of the parishes, to which **Fr Jerald** replied it is not. He also expressed concern with losing touch with the community, as well as the loss of community identity in the process. **Sheryl** concurred that the congregation's connection with the priest and community was crucial for its sustenance and growth. **Sheryl** also asked about the impact on schools and parish resources when forming a mission. **Frank Smit** replied that schools have been administratively separated from the parish since 2021, and is now under the purview of Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools (MACS). The parish councils of the parishes will jointly make the decisions on resources.

Ravi Kamath questioned whether the Archdiocese has plans to amalgamate existing parishes. **Fr Jerald** opined that the possibility is there for it to happen in 10 to 15 years.

Paul O'Connor asked if the parish attendance numbers will determine whether the parish will be closed, while **Nicole Morabito** asked who the decision maker was on the amalgamation of churches. **Fr Jerald** replied that while the Archdiocese had engaged a consultant to complete a study of viability, it has maintained that the final decision rests with the local community. Nonetheless, the reality was uncertain at best.

Cheryl Tay mentioned that the Archdiocese has formed a working group comprising Archdiocese members, clergy and lay members to work through how best to form a mission.

Frank Smit shared that at the recent AGM at Our Lady of the Pines Parish, members expressed preference for status quo, that is, for Fr Jerald to oversee both parishes.

A vote was taken amongst those present who prefer the status quo. With the exception of four, all were for it. Fr Jerald suggested that the parish council of both parishes to work on a joint document to forward to the Archdiocese.

Amongst those against the status quo, **Ravi Kamath** opined that the writing was on the wall, and that retired priests deserve to enjoy their retirement time. **Christine Soosay** felt that consolidation reduces demand on volunteers while increasing the volunteer pool and in all, provide a better support network for the priest.

Dawn Pratley opined that allowing women into priesthood will help resolve the issue of priest shortage.

Dale Gordon-Stewart felt that priesthood is a calling, and that if we felt strongly about keeping the status quo, we should put it strongly to the Archdiocese as one voice.

7) School Report

Bernard Ferre queried the need for a school report in our AGM report since it was no longer under parish purview. **Frank Smit** replied that the parish priest remains the spiritual adviser to the school report remains relevant and of interest to the parish.

8) Pastoral Council Report

On behalf of the parish, Frank Smit expressed thanks to David Ng for his time in leading the parish council while caring for Margaret; and for his continued assistance with leading the children sacramental preparation team.

9) Finance Committee Report

Frank Smit shared that he will be standing down as Chairperson of the Finance Committee, but will remain in the committee till the end of the year. Ravi Kamath will take over leadership of the committee.

He also shared that the current parish resources will not last for more than five years, and the average contribution per parishioner is now \$8. As an old church building, a fair amount of maintenance work had to be carried out regularly, while income over the past two years had come to standstill due to the inability to rent out the parish hall due to the pandemic, passing of many elderly parishioners and reduced contributions. There was an urgent need to find ways to increase income and increase mass attendance.

10) Other Ministries Report

Muriel O’Gorman thanked parishioners for their generous contributions to the Vinnies pantry and appeals over the year despite the impact of the pandemic.

Cheryl Tay shared her thoughts and actions in getting young families more involved in the parish. Parents are now asked to attend sacramental preparation classes with their child, and all children preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation are encouraged to sign up as

an altar server as they wait to prepare for their next Sacrament. These and other young families in the parish were also invited to participate in a monthly youth family mass where they try out different roles at mass, and 10 families responded. The group will be having their first social lunch in August. The hope is that the participation of these young families will encourage others to join in and over time, participation will overflow into regular ministries.

Another area that could raise interest in school and parish families was in the area of social justice, where the church provides a service such as soup van to the community. More time and resources would be needed to flesh out the idea and any suggestions and ideas would be gladly received. She also asked for parishioners to share any ideas they have on parish revitalisation.

Sheryl Kamath raised the idea of a school or community fete. **Cheryl** replied that a fete was resource intensive, and both the parish and school were unable to put together the resource required.

11) Matters Arising from Ministries

Ravi Kamath thanked Frank Smit for all his years of contribution to the parish, especially in the finance committee.

Michael Liddy suggested that the parish council communicates what it was working on or completed to parishioners through an update in the parish newsletter once a quarter. It would also be good to provide names and contact details of PPC members in the update.

Muriel O’Gorman shared that the parish school has started a mini vinnies and members have all been very enthusiastic.

11) Q & A

There were no further questions.

12) General Business

There were no general business.

13) Closing

The meeting was closed with the closing prayer at the end of the AGM report.

Minutes by

Reviewed by Fr Jerald Mariadas