

Malahide Parish Pastoral Council

Annual Report 2021/2022

The current Parish Pastoral Council for St Sylvester's Parish, Malahide, Co Dublin, was formed during Summer 2021 following an open invitation to all parishioners in June. Five members from the previous PPC continued in place. Ten new members agreed to join as well as Deacon Gerard. Subsequently, three of the new members resigned for personal reasons.

The first meeting of the new PPC was on 1st September 2021. The October and November meetings were training and familiarisation sessions to bring everyone up to date on what is required from PPCs, plus a carryover from the previous PPC. Part of that handover was continuing the Divine Renovation concept of transforming the Parish "from Maintenance to Mission" to revitalise it.

Elections were also held for Chair and Secretary during this time. The position of Vice Chair was not filled as the members of the PPC felt that for the few occasions on which the role would be used, a rotating system could be used.

Immediately COVID created problems with "in-person" meetings, so the December meeting was by ZOOM. This continued until May 2022 when in-person meetings were restored.

1. Meeting Structure

The work of the PPC is undertaken in a spirit of prayerful reflection so that all can feel the Holy Spirit working within us and among us. In this way, we are also growing in our faith as members of the PPC. Each meeting opens and closes with a Prayer. Each Sub-Group reports and then there is normally a discussion topic. The meetings end with a discussion on current developments/activities in the Parish, followed by the closing prayer. Normal minutes are recorded and, in addition, where a substantial discussion has taken place, the spirit of that discussion is captured in a separate document where the contributions are not attributed to individual members.

2. Activities

It was decided from the beginning that very little could be achieved with just one meeting per month, and therefore, several Sub-Groups were set up to progress different activities. Members with an interest in a particular area can choose the sub-group they wish to join. Those teams are expected to progress their activities between PPC meetings and give a progress report at each meeting. The hope is that all members of the PPC will be active in at least one of these teams.

- **Parish Transformation Team (PTT).** This Team had been working for over a year based on a mandate from the previous PPC. It has six members and is developing the Parish Transformation agenda, or how to "move from maintenance to mission." It produces papers that can become the

proposal and starting point for new initiatives or Sub-Groups of the PPC. Through the National Alpha and Divine Renovation groups, it keeps up to date on best practice and what is happening in Parish Transformation across Ireland.

- **Communications Team.** A dedicated Team exists to look at the Communications structure for the Parish and put that structure in place. So far, the Team has developed an email-based communications system for the parish and each week it distributes an expanded Parish Newsletter.

The Parish contact list needs to be expanded and include those parishioners who are not regular attendees so that they can be aware of activities and new initiatives that may be of interest to them.

The Team is now considering a Social Media strategy for the parish.

There is also a discussion on improving the messaging on Parish Activities outside the church. One idea for consideration is installing a new electronic notice board out front to publicise Parish activities and messages. This could be expensive and will have ongoing message maintenance issues.

- **Adult Faith & Prayer Team.** To develop and implement an agreed programme of public prayer, faith development and education.

They have brought back public recitation of the Rosary after daily Mass, an hour of prayer on Thursdays, and Eucharistic Adoration during the week. They also put Marian activities together in May and are working on a range of new activities including a Parish Book Club and another “Night Fever” evening.

Their intent is to develop and publish a programme and calendar of regular activities in line with the Liturgical Calendar and are looking for more people to work with them.

- **Eco Team.** This Team is to develop how we as a Parish become more alert to our use of natural resources, including power, water, environment, and protect biodiversity in the spirit of Pope Francis’s Laudato Si Encyclical. The Parish may take part in the ECO Parish award. Initially, the group has started maintaining the areas outside the front of the church and is looking at ideas for appropriate future development and maintenance of the area as well as other Parish Eco-activities.

- **The Synodality Group** organized and lead the Parish process and response to the Diocesan Synodality activity. The final Report is available on the Parish Website. This Sub-Group has now disbanded.

- **Building Hope.** The PPC, with the Finance Committee and Fr Kevin, took a leading role in the Building Hope Process to consult with the members of the parish on what is working well and what should be improved in our Parish. This exercise commenced on Easter Sunday and continued until Pentecost. The final Report was submitted and is available on the Parish Website.

- **Malahide Contact and Support Network (MCSN)** is the latest Sub-Group and is setting up a system to provide help and support to vulnerable people in the Community. Their initial initiative was a Solidarity Lunch for 50 Ukrainian Refugees in the area on 11th June.

A full programme of activities will be published in September.

As we move from maintenance of the status quo to a more missionary approach of inviting others to join our community and welcoming them, more people will be needed to develop and implement the Parish Vision.

3. Many parish activities continue or have been restored and encouraged, such as:

The restoration of the Angelus Bell, weekly Bible studies, Bethany Group, Baptism Group, Liturgy Group, St Vincent de Paul Society, monthly Seniors' Social, weekly Alzheimer's Society Respite in St Benedict's, the May Altar, return of The Legion of Mary, Lectio Divina. Biographies of the Saints were placed at the entrance to the relevant rooms in the Centre, etc. These are organised by individuals or Groups in the Parish.

The role of the PPC is to encourage Parishioners to propose and develop such ideas.

4. New Activities in development include:

- **Welcome** and **Worship** Groups as well as support and training for existing **Ministers of The Word** and **Ministers of Holy Communion**.
- Encouraging more involvement of **Parents** in the preparation of children for **Baptism** and, in association with the schools and the Dublin "Accompanying Families" Sacraments of Initiation policy, for **First Holy Communion and Confirmation**.
- The possibility of having an active **Pro Life** programme in place in the parish.
- It is also hoped to reintroduce **Alpha Programmes**, to follow the one in 2020.

5. A Youth Ministry is needed.

To address the needs of young adults and make the parish a more welcome and relevant place for them, we need people to re-energise youth involvement. We need to listen to young people. They do not feel attracted to the church. Should we have a dedicated Youth Pastoral Worker in the Cluster?

6. Parish Vision

A revision to the Parish Vision statement to include the concept of "missionary" was proposed by the PTT in January. Discussion to agree a new statement took place in the PPC over six monthly meetings. The debate did not result in consensus. Ultimately, it was agreed to let the matter settle and the existing vision statement remains in place.

7. The Challenges.

- **COVID restrictions** were a very disruptive force, the need to balance public health and the safeguarding of people attending Mass or visiting the church were the significant challenges during the year. This generated much heated discussion on the need for stringency and the difficulty of striking the right balance between the spiritual needs of people and their safety as the pandemic played out.
- The **Synodality and Building Hope** consultations gave us an indication of the yearning amongst parishioners for change and the development of a more caring and inclusive parish without losing the traditional practices that are a great comfort to many. We need the active involvement of all the faithful of the Parish, especially young adults, if we are to get the balance right and reach the Vision for our Parish of “building a community of welcome, love, and respect by helping and supporting each other to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ”
- **Reaching out** to the wider less involved Catholic community will require active outreach and evangelisation activity. In this regard, we need to look at their needs and the opportunities offered by the Parish Centre environment and facilities.
- One issue is how those who are in need can easily access the supports, services, and contacts they need. We need to actively look at the **support available for the less well-off** in our community – those Irish in need, people in Direct Provision, Refugees. Often what they need is our understanding and companionship, not sympathy and charity.
- The **workload** on the Parish Priest of this busy parish is a concern to many people. How can we, the Parishioners, ease that workload and free him from administration pressure as he goes about his pastoral responsibilities?
- In August Fr Kevin Moore was replaced by Fr Kevin Doherty as Parish Priest. The PPC expressed its appreciation to Fr Kevin for his leadership, gentle understanding, kindness and comfort to so many parishioners over his nine years in Malahide and wished him well in his new parish.
We welcome Fr Kevin Doherty to the Parish and hope that he will get much joy and satisfaction from his ministry in Malahide.

8. The Future.

In our second year, the intention of the PPC is to develop these ideas further and implement them in our Parish life. We hope as a council to encourage parishioners to take an active part in their parish going forward and together we can grow in faith and give strength to our parish community.

Therefore, we ask for the individual help of each member of our Parish Community in framing, developing, and implementing ideas, activities, and practices to enhance both the spiritual and community support life of our Parish.

We welcome the fact that Mary Kirk will remain with us for at least another year in her role as Parish Pastoral Worker.

*With the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit
together we can succeed in achieving our Vision*

Members of the Malahide Parish Pastoral Council 2021 to 2022

Edel O'Dea	Martha White	Paula Carty
Deacon Gerard Reilly	Mary Flannery	Pauline Duddy
Jim Lawler (Chair)	Mary McGrath	Ronan Reynolds
John Lynch	Mary Whelan (Secretary)	Shane Melvin
Fr Kevin Moore (President)	Michael Howard	