

OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF CONSTANTIA

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT TO PARISHIONERS AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PARISH, HELD ON THURSDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2010, ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 OCTOBER 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) is constituted in accordance with the *Statutes For Parish Pastoral Councils* (the Statutes), as promulgated by the Archbishop in April 2008 for the Archdiocese of Cape Town, with the objective of collaborating with our parish priest, Fr. Andrew Cox, in a consultative and advisory capacity in the mission of the parish.

The PPC comprises the parish priest who is President of the Council, our deacon, elected members of the parish, representatives of approved parish associations and religious and secular institutions together with parishioners appointed by the parish priest.

The Statutes highlight the following matters as falling within the competence of the PPC:

- Fostering an identity with the local Church
- Liturgical
- Catechetical Instruction
- The Catechumenate or RCIA
- Evangelisation
- Apostolate to the Unchurched
- Basic Christian Communities/Small Faith Sharing Groups
- Family Life Apostolate
- Social Apostolate
- Youth Apostolate
- Community Activities
- Vocations
- Ecumenism
- Justice and Peace
- Additions to and Maintenance of Existing Immovable Property.

Members of the PPC and their portfolios during the year under review were as follows:

Portfolio	Parish Councillors Name
President	Fr Andrew Cox
Chairperson	Annabel Horn
Vice - Chairperson	Sean Defty
Secretary	Jacqui Lukic
Buildings & Maintenance	Mike Killick
Liturgy	Christopher Gird
New Parishioners	Megan Veldhuis
Fund Raising / Events	Barry Visagie Sean Defty Dominic Gordon Mariella Norman Jacqui Lukic
Deanery	Annabel Horn
Justice & Peace	Mariella Norman Annabel Horn
Outreach	Dec. Richard Aguirre

Additional persons who have representation at the PPC

- Sr. Doreen: Schoenstatt
- Anne-Marie Goemans: Mothers Group/ Family Group
- Justin Groenewald: Youth
- Kate Heins: Catechetics
- Kevin Morris: Youth
- Kay Smith: Catholic Women's Group
- The Care Group: an active group but because of the confidential nature of the portfolio it is more appropriate to meet separately

2. OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE STATUTES OF PARISH PASTORAL COUNCILS

As chairperson this year I will try to set out this report in such a way as to indicate the ways in which we have attempted, under the guidance of Fr Andrew Cox to meet the requirements of the statutes for Parish Councils. This we would see as the attempt to fulfill our obligations to the church community in our service as Parish Council members. I do need to begin by acknowledging Shane Leisegang who led the parish council in an able and consultative way, until he passed away just three months before this meeting. Shane was valued by our committee and following this loss, as vice-chairperson I accepted to take on this position.

Fostering an identity with the local Church

As parish council members we have attempted to act interactively with parishioners. Opportunities have been opened for parishioners to participate in different portfolios. The parish councilors have also shown themselves to be strongly supportive of the different events that have taken place, which would include liturgical events.

We are most grateful to Sr. Doreen for attending our Parish Council meetings and with the Schoenstatt community so close, we feel that Schoenstatt is a part of our local church.

Liturgical

The Liturgical Portfolio consists of the following liturgical ministries:

Readers – The PPC would like to express their appreciation to Andy Kapp, who coordinated the readers, until he recently passed away. All readers for weekend Mass's have been trained by Fr. Andrew. This included an introduction to biblical knowledge, and liturgy, as well as microphone technique.

Sacristans – Brenda Gibbs has given her time in ensuring that the sacristans are rostered and making provision for the training of sacristans by other sacristans. The sense of entering a holy place when we serve on the altar, and reverence for the role played is part of the training of the sacristans.

Liturgical Music – Andrew Bentley coordinates the music for all the major celebrations and is the choir master for the Sunday morning choir. Gavin Buchanan is the folk band master for Sunday evening.

Altar Servers – Christopher Gird has been running training programs for new servers. Whilst we ask parents of all youth, who serve on the altar, to express to their children how much we value their participation in the masses, we appeal to all other parents to encourage their children to come forward for training as altar servers.

Ushers – This is a liturgical area of service that still needs to receive greater attention, although some attempts at doing so have already begun.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion– The role in this area of service is to serve at masses and take the sacrament to those who are not well in our parish. There has been a call for these Ministers to respond to the need to serve in Groote Schuur Hospital as well.

There have been special liturgical celebrations that our church has been involved in.
- Weekly Stations-of-the-Cross during Lent was shared by various groups in the church.

- A Corpus Christi procession to Schoenstatt took place.
- Monthly Benediction and Divine Mercy has taken place on a Monday.
- Shelter Seeking during Advent, was enjoyed by our young families in particular, as the stable with the baby Jesus and his mother and father was taken from one family to another.

Catechetical Instruction / The Catechumenate Programme

Kate Heins has a real reputation in our church for being able to manage large numbers of students across the catechetical programme and together with a wonderful team of teachers provides in depth teaching for our youth.

The “Faith and Life Series” curriculum has proved to be excellent and the teachers have gained valuable knowledge and experience from using this program.

Archbishop Stephen Brislin confirmed parishioners in September on a day which will long be remembered as very special by those involved. Later this week on All Saints Day many youth will be receiving their First Holy Communion.

Father Andrew Cox dedicates his time to preparing the young confirmation candidates. He also teaches the catechumenate programme, which he inclusively calls the Adult Instruction Programme and to which all are invited.

Evangelisation

Whilst our faith sharing groups and so much of what we do could be seen as evangelisation, there is a special film programme that we are introducing through the deanery that will be centred on respect for the body and the catholic perspective on sexuality and respect for life.

Apostolate to the Unchurched

This is an area of our ministry that could be further developed. Father Andrew Cox speaks of the large numbers of people that are touched through funeral services. The outreach programme also now visit the people to whom assistance will be given, which involves walking amongst and talking to the poor of our city, who are not necessarily linked to any church.

Basic Christian Communities/Small Faith Sharing Groups

This has centred on parishioner knowledge of the faith and spirituality. The Encounter – Prayer and Life programme has run over four months and has deeply enriched the lives of all who took part. This has extended faith into our homes, as the participants are asked to pray and read the scriptures, using a different approach every week, for half an hour every day. John Burke and Tracey van Wyk you have done well to bring the spirituality of Father Ignacio Larranaga of Chile to us. We have grown in depth in our faith and been made ever mindful of the world-wide church of which we are a part.

Family Life Apostolate

The mother's group, led by Anne-Marie Goemans, continues to meet and pray the rosary regularly. Very beautifully every child is included, by encouraging each one to say their own prayer. Here our mothers can experience fellowship in a city which can be lonely at times.

A men's group has been meeting to discuss approaches to living successful and meaningful lives, with Brian Goemans.

Social Apostolate

Our Deacon Richard Aguirre is appealing to parishioners to volunteer to assist the team, as we have developed a hands on approach to Outreach. The team spends time with the poor and ensures that the people will truly benefit from the programmes to which we give our donations. Fr received a letter from the Archdiocese complimenting us on the generosity of our parish – Richard would like to continue to uphold this reputation. Currently 7% of all donations to the church are given to the outreach activities. We are taking a local approach now and looking particularly at areas such as Lavender Hill, where we would be working with St Vincent de Paul societies, from Retreat for instance.

The Care Group, convened by Francoise Robertson, comprises seven members who meet every month on a regular basis. They maintain contact with the Parish Secretary who confidentially reports to them any need in the Parish that has come to her attention.

From the parish council we have a representation to the Deanery Council, in the persons of Rev Richard Aguirre, Annabel Horn and Father Andrew Cox who leads the Council. This enables our church to liaise further with other churches in the area, not only to interact as people but also to develop initiatives which will be to the benefit of all our parishioners.

Community Activities/ Youth Apostolate

There are a number of groups in our church that focus on this area. We have the care group that will offer their prayers and friendship in difficult times.

We have the Constantia Catholic Women's Group, led by Yvonne Kapp who have hosted soup evenings and a fish and chips evening. They also meet every Wednesday morning after mass and enjoy a very special camaraderie. Furthermore it is the ladies group, who decorates our church with beautiful seasonal flowers every week and organise teas after funerals.

The youth also drive social activities, as the photos on our website show, with parishioners of all ages, next to piles of sandwiches. And yes they did feed a whole school on that occasion and yes they did make 1500 sandwiches. The youth have also had supportive Dads climbing Lions Head on a full moonlit night. And yes it is true that when the youth have discussion nights on relevant Christian topics there are many types of sponsored pizza to enjoy. Kevin Morris has shown incredible energy in developing our youth programme and we are grateful that Nikky and Ally Pearson are now leading the younger Friday youth programme. And then Peter... amazing introductions to science... Jade... great fun doing the filming...

All newcomers to the parish who have completed registration forms have been contacted telephonically by Megan Veldhuis. Meg then refers all new parishioners to relevant portfolios of interest where someone will follow through and contact the new parishioner again. Thank you, Meg, for your dedication to this task whilst at the same time bringing two little parishioners into the fold. Meg ends her term of office on the parish council.

The Paschal Meal was much enjoyed by all, ably led by Father Andrew in a yarmulke, reminded us all of the importance of our Jewish religious roots. Christ the paschal lamb, linked to the sacrificial lamb protecting the young Jewish sons from the plague. We were able to sponsor a number of parishioners at this meal, and this is an approach that we always need to keep in mind whilst we try to include all who worship in our parish. Transport of parishioners who also would not attend at night without assistance needs to be part of our focus too.

Fund raising events fulfill both their name but very importantly have a fun and social aspect, hence their inclusion at this point.

In the 50/50 Club, Mark Clifford-Holmes has raised considerable funds, and not to pre-empt or repeat any financial details, given by the finance committee I will here and in all instances, leave this to the accountants. (On another continent I started every Monday morning with the banking financial report back and explanations... so not here and now.)

The next advent fair is to be held on the 27th November and now we are actively collecting all those items that clutter your home and bring delight in others.

The chef's evening became the International Food Fair this year, bringing together, the young and the old at the Schoenstatt hall. Plans for next year need to be thought through... some live musicians, a tent outside, tables with chairs for seating...?

On Sunday mornings we have some very special teas and we do thank Geraldine Hendricks for the way she has organised these with her team over the past two years. We do appreciate Sanet Seebrechts taking over this role.

On Sundays Carole Bonorchis and Ethelind Kleu (assisted by Patrick Glover with second collections), count the collection, make up pay packets for the staff and cash payments for other services and do the banking each week.

Dora Nakanyane, Francis Chamdula and Happy Allie who help with the domestic aspects of running the parish also deserve our thanks. We say a very big thank you to Pam Adshade, the parish Secretary, who runs a friendly office. You have been in our thoughts and prayers recently.

We are indebted to Karen Parkin who has and is spending much time on our Parish website. If you have not yet googled Constantia Catholic Church then please do so. There are linkages to interesting sites such as Schoenstatt, Human Life International, as well as insights into pilgrimages that our parishioners have taken across the top of Spain on bicycles... and not least photographs of our own local events.... confirmation and less reverently rocket design and launching by our youth!

Vocations

A decision has been made to incorporate this aspect of our ministry into the catechetical programme. We do consider that more attention could be given to this area.

Ecumenism

We have not addressed ecumenism specifically in our council. Many of our students, in particular male students do attend schools of other Christian denominations, and so these linkages are being formed. Perhaps some of our Justice and Peace meetings would be useful forums to reach out to other churches.

Justice and Peace

U-Turn Project gives parishioners the opportunity to buy vouchers, which can enable the poor to visit a centre, where food, clothing and the possibility of skills training.

Township/Neighbourhood Tours have been undertaken. The itinerary includes visiting a restaurant, schools, CWD projects and the Sisters of Mother Theresa in the township areas of Langa, Gugulethu, and Khayelitsha.

Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Organisation (CPLO) Roundtable discussions have been attended on issues such as the importance of maintaining clean water systems, where the discussions are then used for the development of advisory papers to parliament. A Justice and Peace Forum on health was attended where the MEC for health outlined that 80% of the health budget is spent on lifestyle illnesses such as Aids, TB, car accidents, teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse. There is much work for our church.

We have had two evenings of invited speakers – in March Prof Stan Du Plessis spoke to us about economic justice issues, some very positive, of our current political era – and in May Father Oliver Williams enlightened us on the approach to Business Ethics. The feedback from these talks has been that they were interesting and helpful.

Justice and Peace held a tea for the economic migrants in our parish and listened to their concerns passed on areas of interest within the parish to relevant people. We will continue to encourage the sponsorship of events so that all parishioners are able to partake.

Justice and Peace has had representation at The Helpers of God's Precious Infants continue to hold a mass at the Salesian Institute at 9.30am on the last Saturday of every month and to proceed to hold a prayer vigil outside the abortion clinic. Father Andrew has taken the mass here and it would be wonderful if we as a parish could support the cause and Father Andrew on these infrequent occasions. Mariella Norman and Annabel Horn have been actively involved in Justice and Peace but we do need to build this diverse and interesting portfolio with really committed parishioners?

Additions to and Maintenance of Existing Immovable Property.

Access Ramp to Church – There is a need to provide easier access to the Church for the frail and disabled. Various alternative access ramp layouts were designed and the plans were presented to the Parish Council and Parish Community in June 2009. On the basis of this feedback we proceeded with plans. As is evident this work is currently under way.

Painting of the Parish Buildings - A specification for the internal and external painting of the parish buildings (and remedial work) was developed and completed.

Sincere thanks to Mike Killick, as an outgoing member, who has put in many hours in trying to resolve the maintenance and building needs of the parish in an efficient and cost effective manner.

3. STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE AND CONCLUSION

With a view to developing a vision and mission for the parish a strategic planning initiative, was undertaken by the PPC in 2008. It is important that whilst the parish council is so active and so much seems to be unfolding in our church we do not lose sight of some thinking that went into our strategic planning. We do have strengths.... wonderful strengths.... but let's also be mindful of where in the busyness of our lives we are not reaching out in certain directions. Let's take the time to be on retreat again, to think and to respond in the love of Christ to all people who are in our parish.

Reverend Richard Aguirre, we appreciate the way you have been so consistent and giving in all that you do, in taking services, preaching and through your example of the love of our church. Then, we are led and guided by a man in our parish, Father Andrew Cox, whose great desire is to serve God in all that he does. Although the Catholic Church has gone through both difficulties and joys this year we have been blessed to have had you there to keep us strong and focused in our faith.