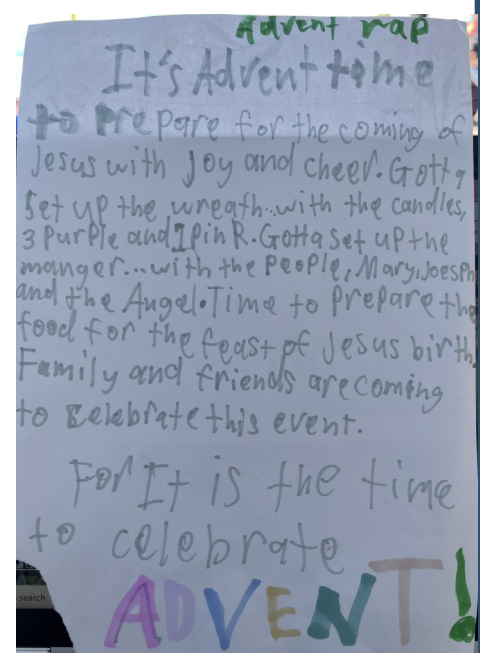


Welcome to the Summer 2023 issue of The Bark.
As we commence our Church year in Advent, it is a good
time to look back at the year that we have just
completed and to celebrate the 'fruits' of our
wonderful parish ... many of which are featured in this
issue. Bark wishes you, your family and friends a very
happy and holy Christmas.

Advent Rap by Charlotte Williams

It's Advent! Time to prepare
for the coming of Jesus with joy and cheer.
Gotta set up the wreath
With the candles, 3 purple and 1 pink.
Gotta set up the manger
With the people, Mary, Joseph and the Angel.
Time to prepare the food for the feast of Jesus birth.
Family and friends are coming to celebrate this event.
For it is the time to celebrate ADVENT!!



Charlotte Williams is 9 years old and in Year 4 at St Declans. She wrote this rap for a project at her school and kindly shared it with **The Bark**.

A fruitful year

“Go make disciples” is the title of the mission document for the Archdiocese of Sydney. It is often referred to as the “great commission” from Jesus to his disciples. (Matthew 28:19-20).

I remember reading those words and thinking that “call” was for missionaries, priests and those who have devoted themselves to the Church, but not something for me. Over the past few years, and especially since becoming part of the Leadership Team, I’ve come to understand the call is directed to me and every member of the Church.

“Every pastor, every member of the faithful and all our parish communities are called to deep spiritual renewal as disciples, to being better connected with each other, and to reaching out better to others” (Archbishop Fisher).

The call to “Go make disciples” is incredibly challenging and can make us feel uncomfortable or unworthy, but it has been amazing to see how our parish at Peakhurst is answering this call through our various ministries.

As a parish, we are very blessed to have Fr Tony and the MGLs guiding us and drawing us deeper in our faith. Fathers Chris, Tony, Brian and Josh are truly “Missionaries of God’s Love”. Their love for the Lord and passion for sharing that love with others has touched and changed many lives in our Parish and beyond. Each one of them is unique, exceptionally gifted and bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. You have the boundless energy and enthusiasm of Fr Tony, the gentleness of Fr Brian, the humour of Fr Josh and the wisdom of Fr Chris.

I would like to thank the other members of the Leadership Team – Fran Simon, Lauren Koszek, Gina Whiley, Sandra Green and Bryan Doyle. They are a wonderful team of people who have come together to serve the parish wholeheartedly. This year there has been a strong focus on supporting the various ministries getting back to “full steam”. There has also been a great deal of training provided to various ministries by Fr Tony.

The team has also started to work on the implementation of the mission document “Go Make Disciples” and the vision for our church. God has placed us in Peakhurst and given us various talents and gifts for His specific purpose. Having Fr Tony and Fr Brian help us discern that purpose is invaluable and we are very grateful for their support, guidance and leadership.

A special “thank you” also to Clarissa Finan, our Parish Secretary, who puts in so much time and effort to keep our parish running smoothly.

Next, I would like to thank all of our ministry leaders and volunteers. Just keeping a parish running is a major effort, but having a parish that is alive and growing like OLF, takes passion, courage, faith, patience and sacrificial love. Since becoming part of the LT, I’ve been amazed by how many ministries we have, how many people volunteer, how many hours are put in, and how dedicated everyone is to serving God, his Church and those in need. I especially want to thank the ministry leaders for the extra effort they put into organising volunteers. Over the past year each ministry has had to deal with many changes and they have all actively stepped up to face those challenges.

At OLF we are blessed to have ministries that cover all aspects of Jesus’ call to “Go make disciples”. Firstly, we have ministries dedicated to faith formation and growth and which provide opportunities for parishioners to enrich their lives. These include our Liturgy, Evangelisation and Sacramental Teams, Catechists, Musicians, Children’s Liturgy, Altar Society, Welcoming, Belonging, OCIA, Visitation and Cornerstone— the Young Adults group.

Next we have our ministries which focus on reaching out to those in need and are filled with volunteers who love to help “our neighbours”. These include the St. Vincent de Paul group, Lending a Hand Team, Catholic Women’s League and Friendship Group.

Finally, there are those who volunteer within the Operations team which are vital in the smooth running of our Parish. These include Finance, Maintenance, Communications, the Bark and Safeguarding. Many of these volunteers are not seen but without them our church couldn’t function.

Seeing how the various ministries work together reminds me of how we are “one body with many members” (1 Cor.12-27) . We all have our own talents and passions but it’s in working together that we make a difference. *“I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.” Mother Teresa.* Please continue to encourage and thank one another in all that we do.

At OLF there are so many opportunities to serve God and His Church. I encourage all parishioners to consider volunteering to assist the parish. No matter your age, talents, or how much time you can spare, there is a need for you. Simply ask how you can help. It will be a blessing for the Church and for yourself.

Below is just a “taste” of all that has been happening through OLF in 2023.

- Fatima Funday celebration with over 300 kids and adults enjoying the day
- Parish Retreat, Pilgrimages, Taizé nights, Rosary Novena and Marian procession
- Two more series of *The Search* with 180 participants and 30 helpers. Start of “Connect” groups.
- Revitalised Welcoming Team with 56 parishioners helping welcome people to Mass, morning teas, bacon and egg rolls for Mother’s Day and Father’s Day
- Beautiful liturgical celebrations with singing from all our talented musicians and choirs
- Sacramental programs providing faith formation leading to 22 children being baptised, 31 children receiving First Holy communion, 37 children confirmed and four people journeying through OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) program
- Dedicated catechists teaching children in public schools and collaborating to share ideas and support each other
- Vinnies continuing to help those in need in our local community
- Re-starting of the children’s playtime group and refurbishment of the cubby house
- Children’s Liturgy / Sunday school having 45 children at one Mass
- Fortnightly meeting of the Friendship Group and Cornerstone Young Adults group
- CWL Hosting of the Annual World Day of Prayer and Spring Fashion parade
- Lending a Hand donating \$8070 from OLF to Eureka Community Service and supporting various events like the Homicide Victim’s Support Group’s Ride for Justice and thousands of meals served through “One Meal”
- Sharing what our parish does to the community through quarterly editions of the “Bark”
- Over 1,800 followers on OLF Facebook page and Instagram. Updating of OLF website.
- Setup of ministries with new OLF email addresses and Microsoft Office 365
-And the list goes on.

Left to right: (back) Clarissa Finan, Frances Simon, Daniel Craven, Fr Brian Steele, Gina Whiley, Lauren Koszek, Fr Tony Alex and (front) Sandra Green and Bryan Doyle.

Please take the time to read the various ministry reports available on the parish website. You will be amazed at what God is doing through all the wonderful ministries at OLF and the people who serve in them.

In conclusion, it has been a great joy to see the church in Peakhurst continuing to grow. It is an exciting time for our parish and we look forward to another fruitful year. The Leadership Team hold you all in our prayers. Please continue to pray for our Priests, the Leadership Team and all the ministries at OLF. Thank you and God bless.

Daniel Craven
Chairperson, Leadership Team



Welcome to the Leadership Team

At the recent Annual Parish Meeting we farewelled and thanked two members of the Leadership Team (Lauren Koszek and Frances Simon) who have completed their three-year term and welcomed our two new members, Ritta Khoury and Florence Bonnano, who introduce themselves below:



My name is **Ritta Khoury**. I have been attending OLF Peakhurst since 2000. I have, from the start, felt that this was a very special place but did not feel like I was closely connected to the community until I attended *The Search* in 2022. From that moment onwards I have found myself participating in a caring and supportive community of like-minded individuals who are seeking God and what it means to live a meaningful Christ-centred life.

I am a Catholic from birth and both my parents are not only practicing Catholics but deeply-faithful individuals who raised us with the sense that God and our right relationship with Him was really the only thing that mattered. I have been seeking God my whole life but never knew until doing *The Search* that, more importantly, God is seeking me.

Following *The Search* I have become involved in *OCIA* for adults wishing to become fully initiated into the Catholic faith. This journey began last year with four candidates and we are now into the second season with three new candidates on this blessed journey. The *OCIA* experience and a second season of *The Search* have been life-changing events for me and becoming more deeply involved in parish life and various ministries continues to deepen my connection to God and my understanding of His purpose for my life.

I am a wife, a mother to a beautiful 18-year-old daughter, a daughter, a sister to two wonderful siblings and a business owner who runs two national companies that I have co-founded with my dear husband. My life is blessedly 'full' and while it seems there is never a spare moment I feel oddly energized and renewed every time I am at a church event or involved in any parish ministry.

I am grateful to be involved in the rich and diverse OLF Peakhurst community and to be playing an active part in the parish's mission. I pray that together we will continue to bear witness to our Lord Jesus and to provide a safe refuge for those seeking respite from an isolating, complex and stressful world.

Florence Bonanno

I have been a member of OLF since 2007. I am a mum of two: Mia aged 12 and Alessandro aged 5. During my time in the Parish I have been blessed to be involved in various ministries and events. Most recently I completed a series of *The Search*. On the outside this appeared to be a group activity however, surprisingly, I found this to be a deeply personal experience that has deepened my relationship with the Lord and I note it as a significant milestone in my life.

I am grateful for the role our priests and our parish community have played in my faith journey and I look forward to serving you as a member of the Leadership Team.



Why IS Safeguarding so important?

The role of the Safeguarding Support Officer (SSO) is to support and to assist the Parish Priest in his Safeguarding responsibilities and to ensure the Archdiocese of Sydney's Policy and Protocols are implemented and maintained to create safe environments for young people and vulnerable people in our parish. This year all SSOs had to complete refresher training which included new requirements for Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct.

One responsibility of the SSO is to prepare Risk Assessments for any regular child-related activities such as our Sacramental Program (Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation), Children's choir, Altar Servers' ministry and Children's Liturgy. In addition to this, our Parish Fun Day held in October required a risk assessment to ensure the protection of all children involved in the activities on this day.

Every six months all parishes are required to submit to the Archdiocese a Child-Related Activity Register which lists all 'child-related' workers and volunteers in our parish. The following ministry roles have been deemed as Child-Related Work by the Office of the Children's Guardian:

- Parish Secretary
- Sacramental Coordinator and Sacramental Group Leaders
- Catechist Co-ordinator and Catechists teaching in Public Schools
- Children's Liturgy Co-ordinators
- Acolytes and Senior Altar Servers
- Ministers of the Word/Readers/Lectors
- Parish Collectors (AKA Wardens)
- Extraordinary Ministers of Communion
- Children's Choir Co-ordinator and members over 18 years of age

The Register lists the names of all these workers and volunteers and documents that they have a verified and current Working with Children Check (WWCC). All on this list must also complete a Safeguarding Induction course every three years, either online or on site. This year our Parish conducted Liturgy training courses for previous and new volunteers. As a result, required Safeguarding documentation was collected and Safeguarding Induction training was undertaken by all new volunteers. Thank you to all volunteers who responded to the requests for Working with Children Checks and who completed the Safeguarding Induction courses.

Many thanks to Fr Tony and Parish Secretary Clarissa for their assistance with Safeguarding processes and to all volunteers who are supporting all Safeguarding requirements, which ensures our Parish is a safe environment for all our parishioners.

Deb Cummins

OLF Parish Safeguarding Support Officer

(...and thank YOU Deb for the painstaking work you put in to this role!)

Hear! Hear!

Bark received this email a couple of weeks ago from a very grateful member of the parish.

"I have been at OLF for 45 years and regret not thanking the Parish for the PA system previously well serviced by Peter Atkins. I would also like to thank the Parish for updating the PA system to include Bluetooth. For people like me (hard of hearing) it means speech comes DIRECTLY into my ears! This now allows me to follow Mass and HEAR the sermons. Thank you for keeping it continually serviced."

One extra happy parishioner.

VINNIE'S NEWS

The message of the 2023 Vinnies Christmas Appeal is "Restore hope to households". This describes most simply what our volunteer mission is.

Since October this conference has mostly been assisting people who are coming from temporary or homeless situations. Helping people settle into secure housing has been satisfying and rewarding.

We are currently seeking at least two new members who have one day available in most weeks of the year to volunteer. Training for new volunteers is carried out within our group and further support is given by Vinnies NSW. Our work is carried out locally in teams and volunteer time away is readily accommodated. If you would like to join us, please talk to one of our members or contact me via email.

All the Peakhurst Vinnies members would like to thank our fellow parishioners for their continued prayers, generous response to financial appeals, volunteering with Christmas hampers and gift wrapping. We could not be effective without you. The people we assist always express their appreciation to us.

Cathy Dalby

Cathy.Dalby@vinnies.org.au



Vinnie's conference members celebrating their good works and their good fellowship



Wise Men came from the East: a Prequel



Long, long ago, in the galaxy we know as the Milky Way,* on Planet Earth, in the far-off Orient, three astrologers were gazing excitedly at the night skies. That very night they had discovered a new star.

They were well known to each other, these men: Melchior from Persia, Balthazar from Babylon and Gaspar from India.

They had worked together before and all were very wise in the ways of the stars. They watched this new star all that night, and when daylight came, they searched their ancient manuscripts to find any information about what it could possibly mean.

They found that there was an ancient Persian belief that the rising of a new star betokened the birth of a new ruler. There were also several ancient Hebrew prophecies, saying that about that same time, a child would be born, who would become King. One stated that the child would be born in a town called Bethlehem, in the kingdom of Judah.

With rising curiosity and excitement, they set out on their camels, to follow the star across the vast desert, to visit the land of Judah. Along the way they visited markets, purchasing gifts which would be fitting if they found a new child-king: a bar of gold, a beautiful jar containing crystals of Frankincense, and a glass vial filled with Oil of Myrrh.

They continued on their way, the camels slowly plodding across the desert sands. They did not know what to expect; they were simply following their star.

For further reading – New Testament Luke 2:1 – 20 - the birth of Jesus and Matthew 2:1 – 12 - The visit of the Magi.

* With apologies to George Lucas

Cath Sponberg

Banks Award for a very special One Meal volunteer

If you've ever helped out at our Monday night free meal service at Riverwood, One Meal, you've probably met Sara Monaghan. Sara rang me out of the blue one day quite a while back to volunteer her services. She told me that she takes her son to the community centre at the same time as our meal service each week so she may as well muck in and help us out while he plays. And help us out she has for just about every week since.

With kindness, compassion and a good dose of humour, Sara has set up and served our wonderful clients for ages now and we are very lucky to have her. On 11 October Sara's help was recognised by David Coleman in his Banks' Electorate Volunteer of the Year award ceremony. Senator Jane Hume, Federal Shadow Minister for Finance, was also in attendance to acknowledge Sara's contribution to our local community.



Congratulations Sara for your selfless outreach and compassionate work with those in our community who are in need. One Meal Riverwood is organised and co-ordinated by the Our Lady of Fatima's Lending a Hand team.

Emma Williams, One Meal/Lending a Hand

Fatima Fun Day

On Sunday 15 October our parish celebrated the Anniversary of the Blessing and Opening of our Church* with our second Annual Fatima Fun Day. Held in the parish grounds, the day was attended by over 400 people who enjoyed a sausage sizzle with a cold drink. Devonshire teas, cakes and bags of popcorn were also available as we managed to make sure everyone was catered for. The jumping castles, face painting and balloon sculptor were great hits, keeping kids busy while parents and grandparents had the opportunity to savour the selection of fine wines and cheeses. Mums and daughters delighted in getting their nails painted or hair braided, while the live music assisted to create a truly festive environment, as did the many lucky door prizes and lolly jar guessing competition.

It was only possible to offer such a range of activities due to the generous assistance of so many of our parish volunteers. From those who erected gazebos in the early morning, to those who cooked cakes, oversaw activities and served throughout the day, we are very thankful. Our thanks too for the financial donations we received to assist in covering the cost of the day. We are especially grateful to 'Club Central' (Illawarra Catholic Club) who sponsored our event with a donation of \$500.

The day was a great success as we celebrated our parish's special day while welcoming many families who have been part of our sacramental programs or who are students in our catechists' classes in the local public schools. We hope this Fun Day continues to be an annual tradition in our Parish.

Frances Simon, Leadership Team

**13 October is the date of the third appearance of Our Lady to the children at Fatima and the date of the Miracle of the Sun*



Pilgrimage – a journey to God

“Visitations and Saints” was the name of the pilgrimage which Fr Brian recently accompanied through Portugal, Spain and on to France. Focussing on the two great Marian Shrines, Fatima and Lourdes, the 19-day journey also visited many significant places in the lives of great saints of our faith.

However, despite the grandeur of some of the shrines, what Fr Brian brought back with him was an overwhelming sense of the “human-ness” of the saints and the challenges that they lived with, and through. Visiting birthplaces and tombs, sites of apparitions and other significant places was both awe-inspiring and grounding, giving insight into the reality of their lives as distinct from our perceptions which can be influenced by our own experiences and lives in the 21st century.

Did you know that St Anthony of Padua (Patron Saint of Lost Things – among many other patronages) was actually born in Lisbon, Portugal but died in Padua, Italy? As he visited the birthplace of St Anthony, Father Brian's thoughts were that he was walking on the same cobbled streets under the same sky as that great saint – both humbling and inspiring.

In Fatima, the pilgrims visited the very humble and small homes of the three children, Francisco, Jacinta, and Lucia in the village of Aljustrel, which contrasted very sharply with the huge shrine. They also journeyed to the site of the apparitions as well as other special places at Fatima. Despite the commercialisation evident, Fr Brian felt the ‘tremendous amount of faith’ present during the candlelit procession and Masses. As a parish we can be very grateful for the prayers offered for our church family by Fr Brian who summed up his experience at Fatima as a deep understanding that “Our Lady really loves us, particularly those who put themselves under her patronage”.

In Spain, the pilgrims visited many significant sites including Alba de Torres where St Teresa of Avila died. Relics of her incorrupt heart and arm are kept here in the convent. Fr Brian also visited a Convent founded by St Teresa of Avila where St John of the Cross would come and visit St Teresa to help accompany her spiritual journey. In Avila, praying over the Precious Blood in the same place where St Teresa had experienced

transverberation (a mystical grace wherein the Saint's heart was pierced with a "dart of love" by an angel), Father Brian had an intense experience of receiving the grace of divine love and mercy which touched his heart; a very intimate love.

Fr Brian's pilgrim group then travelled through Segovia where St John of the Cross is buried and to the birthplace of St Dominic at Caleruega, then to the village of Santo Domingo de Silos and onward to Lourdes where they spent three nights. Again, despite obvious commercialisation, Father Brian spoke movingly of the significance of visiting this holy place where, in these modern times, the traditional baths have been replaced by a water fountain. The traditions of 19th century Catholicism are maintained in the wonderful experience of Mass and private prayer in the Grotto as well as the evening candlelit procession.

Time spent in Montserrat and Manresa was again very significant with a visit to the holy cave where St Ignatius kept vigil and started to develop his Spiritual Exercises. It was at Manresa that Fr Brian touched the cross carved by St Ignatius in the place where the saint himself had prayed and there felt a burning in his heart and a feeling of the transformative love of Jesus.

A highlight of the group's time in Barcelona was, not surprisingly, a visit to La Sagrada Familia, the famous and, as-yet-unfinished, basilica designed by Gaudi. Fr Brian described it as "noisy and spectacular with stunning architecture which leaves you speechless".

Fr Brian journeyed onwards into France with a smaller group, visiting some very special places of our faith including Nevers, Mont St Michel, Paray-le-Monial (where St Margaret Mary Alacoque experienced visions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the 17th century), Chartres, Lisieux (home to St Therese, the "Little Flower") and Taize.

Many of us are familiar with the Taize prayer services held at our parish. However, it is enlightening to learn that the Taize Community is comprised of young people from all over the world from many Christian faiths who join together in prayer.

While praying at Mass at Nevers, where St Bernadette's incorrupt body lies in the convent, Father Brian again experienced a burning sensation in his heart and described this as a 'healing love'.

Fr Brian, when asked to provide a few words about the experience of pilgrimage, said "sacrificial, taxing, exhausting, spiritually refreshing and rewarding." He added that people who undertake a pilgrimage are purposeful, seeking the Lord in prayer, often searching for direction or conversion or reconciliation. He said that he sought to strengthen his relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary through his travels to the Marian Shrines of Fatima and Lourdes.

One outcome of this experience for Fr Brian was a very real understanding of our belief in the "communion of saints" – experiencing their friendship, their fellowship and their desire for us to pray through them for intercession. Celebrating this year's All Saints Day was all the more meaningful for this pilgrimage experience.

When asked if it is possible to have the pilgrimage experience without leaving home, Fr Brian responded that the Church's Year is, in itself, a pilgrimage as we encounter the life of Christ and His Church through the liturgical calendar with its many feast days and days of solemnity.

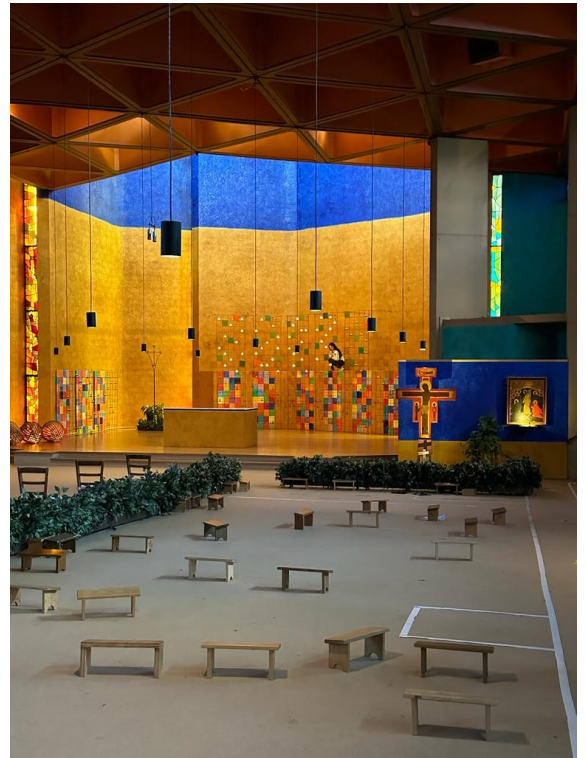
Pilgrimage is, indeed, a journey to God.



Bark thanks Fr Brian for taking the time to share his experience with us.

Fr Brian Steele (left) and right and over page...many of the wonderful places visited by the pilgrims .





Some of the many special and sacred places visited by the pilgrims including Fr Brian.



Rosary and Novena celebrating Our Lady of Fatima



During October, the Month of the Rosary, the Catholic Women's League led the Rosary and a Novena to our Lady of Fatima at every morning at 9 o'clock culminating on the Anniversary of the last appearance of Our Lady on 13 October.

That evening, the Statue of Our Lady was carried in a candle-lit procession from the carpark into the church and concluded with an hour of Adoration.

The morning Rosary and Novena were well attended, particularly considering they started at nine o'clock every morning. The final evening was a moving and prayerful event.

Noelene Hammond, Catholic Women's League.



Small Things



Am I a ripple that can make waves? The ocean is so large, what impact can my ripple make?

You may drop a pebble in the ocean and walk away. That pebble can ripple the water softly and be forgotten but if the wind comes up and carries that ripple long enough and far enough the ripple can become a wave and waves have power. It is in the small things that there is great power. You can never know the power of your ripple.

Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "Let us not use bombs and guns to overcome the world. Let us use love and compassion. Peace begins with a smile. Smile five times a day at someone you don't really want to smile at:

do it for peace." Few of us can lead an army or make political decisions but we **can** smile and at Our Lady of Fatima we are trying to make it contagious.

At the weekend Masses there is a smile that greets you and that smile belongs to a member of our Welcoming Team. In 2023 this team was reignited to start a ripple. It starts with a smile but then perhaps a conversation and a conversation can lead into unknown waters.

The Welcomers are there for you. Please respond to that warm smile and if you need information or perhaps some support, let them know.

Welcomers are people like you and me; they don't have all the answers but can point you in the right direction. We are part of a broader community and no-one needs to walk alone.

Some people have strong family support which lifts them in times of trouble, while others may feel isolated. Please never feel alone - just respond to that smile.

Another quote from Saint Mother Teresa that is worth holding close is:

"Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love"

Maria Vaux, Welcoming Team

Pancake fun at Playtime

On Tuesday 21 November Our Lady of Fatima Playtime group organized a pancake morning tea. The children learnt that cooking is fun and creating yummy toppings with fresh fruit and jams is great!

Every Tuesday the group meets from 10am to 12 noon and children play in a great secure area. A sand pit is large enough to build many sandcastles. The cubby house is always a hit with the little ones. Each week the group organizes a craft and story time session.

If you have a young baby, toddler or preschooler, you are a mum, dad or grandparent, come and join us if you can and enrich your little one with playtime fun. The photos below paint the story!

Maria Jefferies, Playtime member



Playtime – serious fun!

We are a happy lot at OLF's Playtime—toddlers, mums and grandmas—as we gather each Tuesday from 10 am until noon.

Maria Jefferies has put together a wonderful roster organising who is in charge each week for morning tea, craft, story time and music/dancing. We take our roles very seriously and ring for help if we can't be there! (Not true; it is a very relaxed situation and we all just help out with everything!)

About two months ago we had a working bee one Saturday morning and sorted out the broken toys from the usable ones. The toys are now organised into separate containers for easy access each Tuesday.

Whoever arrives first starts to bring out the toys for the day. The little kitchen is a favourite where delectable delights are produced each week: plastic corn, broccoli and carrots get blended with leaves and twigs and sometimes a dash of dirt, a few small cars and the odd assortment of stray Lego all in the miniature saucepans and then vigorously blended with the little cooking implements. Interestingly, this all happens peacefully.

The dolls' house is the perfect spot to arrange fierce jungle animals interspersed with pumped up Super Heroes and a few bedraggled Barbies - all are welcome!!

Off then to play with the various trikes. The Grandmas all like the ones with long handles for pushing imperious dictators (aka cherished grandchildren) relentlessly around the paved area outside the meeting room and the hall. Sometimes the hall is in use but we all manage to work together.

Ahh! It must be sandpit and cubby house time; Tonka trucks are filled with sand which is then dumped, castles and patty cakes are produced and then immediately destroyed, usually by the creator, but miraculously all this goes on in parallel play with each to his/her own!!

Elke, Angela Brady's granddaughter, is the resident bell ringer. "It's morning tea time". Weather permitting, we have this outside; a bowl of water is set up and some handwash and a towel and they line up (sort of) to wash their hands before eating.

We each bring a piece of fruit or crackers and then share it; they all have their own drink bottles; it's a very simple arrangement. We also have our morning tea with the children- I assure you that a cup of tea has never tasted as good!!

Bell ringer announces that it is craft time; we adults call it 'craft for adult souls!!' The person in charge of craft for the day gets us all started. This is a very loose arrangement as we all just bring our ideas along. I am amazed that an empty egg container can make such a fantastic caterpillar!! Happily we all enjoy our time of pasting and designing works of great artistic merit. I might add that sometimes it's the adults left pasting and creating!

Elke announces that it is story time now. Craft is quickly put away with the works of art carefully stored in bags to take home to put on the fridge!

We feel we haven't quite nailed story time yet. I think we need more animation and practice with our presentation as toddlers are a very challenging audience. Often an adult is left reading enthusiastically to another adult or to oneself!

Finally, we get to music and dancing where we do better; an old CD player is resurrected and some Wiggle favs are put on and off we go jumping and wiggling and stomping and clapping – believe me Playgroup is not for the faint hearted!

Time to go with all the mums and grandmas silently hoping and praying that rest time will happen as soon as home is reached.

Another day of simple fun and company for everyone. Thank you, Team Playtime. It has been a lovely time of getting to know you all - children and adults.

Jo Fitzpatrick, Playtime Grandma!

<https://ourladyoffatima.com.au/2023/07/22/playtime-at-olf/>



LENDING A HAND - 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

We have been reflecting on another exciting year of activities for the Lending a Hand (LAH) team and would like to share with you some of our achievements during 2023. Firstly, we wish to thank all our parishioners who have supported us so well, in our endeavours during the year.

The LAH committee was established back in 2005 by our parish priest and the Leadership Team. We have very thorough guidelines to observe, and these have been updated over recent years. The LAH committee has a big responsibility in identifying suitable projects to support financially. We have at our disposal 10% of the money contributed to the second collection as the outreach arm of our parish. In addition to donating, LAH identifies projects where our parish community can come together in working parties and provide a service to a needy organisation.

We are grateful for this opportunity to thank our Chairman, Tony Thorpe. Tony leads us with much wisdom and patiently controls many robust conversations whilst keeping us on track. We also want to thank Fathers Tony, Chris, Brian and Josh for their support to LAH.

I believe our major achievement for the year would be our continued support to the Homicide Victims Support Group (HVSF). We have helped that organisation over the past 10 years. Many people from the Parish have assisted the LAH team on a regular basis with maintenance around their two properties at Waterfall which are used for respite accommodation for families impacted by homicide. This includes lawn mowing, garden work, painting and, a few years ago, a mega-garage-sale fundraiser in our church grounds. We also provide the morning tea at their annual Ride for Justice which raises both funds and awareness.

Earlier this year we were invited to the opening of Grace's Place. This property at Doonside is a world-first residential trauma recovery centre for children affected by homicide. It provides accommodation, counselling and support services for up to 12 children and their carers from across NSW and elsewhere in Australia. LAH on behalf of the parish have donated \$10,000 towards this worthwhile project.

Two of our weekly projects are the One Meal program at Riverwood (Emma Williams has an article in this *Bark* about a remarkable One Meal volunteer) . The other activity is the Thursday evenings **Men's Walk and Talk**. Males over the age of 15 years are all welcome and enjoy a five-kilometre walk (or shorter according to individual preferences) around picturesque Gannons Park. Wonderful friendships have developed and we focus on socialising and exercising as we support each person's mental fitness. Once a month following the walk, we progress to Grandview's Bowling Club for dinner. We would heartily welcome some more blokes from our parish and community at this fun time shared. Come along and bring a mate.

During the year, maintenance and building works were completed at the parish of Wilcannia using a previous donation of \$2000 from LAH on behalf of OLF. Work on the guttering and roof plus a new ramp was installed. Seating around the fencing of the church grounds to accommodate people attending large funerals was also constructed. Sr Elizabeth Young, their Parish Life Co-ordinator, sent us several "thank you" messages and is so appreciative of our awareness and donation.

Our Mother's Day cake stall and raffle was a huge success during May. Thanks to all who baked some magnificent delights to sell. \$2295 was raised from these activities and the Lending a Hand Team voted to top this up so that a donation of \$ 3,000 was made to RizeUp Australia from the proceeds. RizeUp has a focus on women and families impacted by domestic violence and its aim and goals fit within the scope of our parish outreach commitment to all those in need of a helping hand.

2023 has also seen Lending a Hand continue our engagement with Eureka Community Services at Burwood. This is an exemplary organisation which provides support, care and so much more to its clients who live with a broad range of disabilities. While clients are funded under the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) for essentials, this money does not extend to funding the type of creative programs and opportunities that the committed professional staff at Eureka continue to develop and implement.

Lending a Hand is involved on a practical level (as seen in the September issue of *The Bark* when we provided a sausage sizzle and donut lunch for their walkathon/wheelathon day) as well as financial support. This year,

on behalf of our parish, we donated just over \$8,000 to purchase a commercial refrigerator and dishwasher to the centre's kitchen which has been rebuilt in order to provide a facility where clients can work to produce food items for sale. This program achieves so much: improving basic living skills, fostering independence and providing dignity through the generation of a small income.

Eurella also operates a business enterprise employing their clients which offers a range of business services such as packaging, product assembly & labelling, shrink wrapping, show bag and promotional packaging, assembling gift packs and gift boxes and assembling information packs, conference and training kits, folders or manuals. Members of the Lending a Hand team are currently planning a visit to this facility to see if there are other areas we can assist.

Three members of Lending a Hand (and their devoted spouses!) attended Eurella's annual fundraiser – a trivia night. Apart from acquitting themselves reasonably well in the questions, they were grateful to be able to support Eurella in this way, talk with so many other people in the community supporting this terrific organisation and were very gratified that Our Lady of Fatima received a big “thank you” in the speeches.

On behalf of the LAH Committee, **we thank you** all for your continued support and interest in our projects during 2023. For next year we are looking at holding another High Tea in our parish hall in support of St Jude's school in Tanzania. We will let you know more once a date is locked in.

We wish you all a very happy, holy and peaceful Christmas plus good health and many funtimes to enjoy during 2024.

Paul Napier for the Lending a Hand Team



Left: The “Walk and Talk Blokes” out and about enjoying a meal and friendship at Grandviews Bowlo!

Below: The “Blokes” ready for action!



Friendship in action

Early December saw the end of a very successful year for our Friendship Group. We have a few new members in our group this year and together we enjoyed our hot Christmas lunch with pudding and custard and a drink or two at Grandviews Bowling Club. We are back together on 19 January 2024.

We have enjoyed our past couple of months with the games of Bingo and Rumikub and our Christmas Sing-a-long. Thank you to John and Maureen Dowd, Ruth Meagher, and Kerry and Peter Atkins for leading us. We love singing the older songs and the Meeting Room was filled with beautiful voices. (See John Dowd's article in this issue of *The Bark*.)

During the year, two of our group, Helen Cozzi and Helen Geary, had to go into care. We remember them always in our prayers. One of our helpers has breast cancer and we also include her in our prayers as she tackles chemotherapy.

Our Melbourne Cup Sweep was supported very well with five sweeps on the go!

We thank all the helpers who, each fortnight, make fresh sandwiches and slices, assist with those who need extra help and provide transport picking up and taking our guests home. We are always in need of a driver or two who has a larger car that can fit in a walker.

We also especially thank Annette. Each fortnight she contacts our guests to check on their welfare, to see if they are coming to our gathering and to arrange who is picking them up. She also informs the helpers of what they need to supply; she is a quiet worker 'hiding' in the background.

We wish you all a happy and Holy Christmas.

Pat Pfoeffler, Friendship Group.



Friendship group—smiles and concentration!

MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER

Recently I had the privilege of playing and singing at the Friendship Group's gathering in November with my wife Maureen, Ruth Meagher, and Kerry and Peter Atkins. We were invited to lead the singing of "the old time favourites" and wow- the group members and helpers all joined in with great gusto! I suggested that they were so good we would love to have them in the parish choir! The wonderful women listed below give their time and effort to transport, entertain and feed a number of senior residents from our area each and every fortnight.

When entering the meeting room you are struck by the joy and friendliness of those present. For me this is what being Christ-like is all about, namely spending time in the service of others. That is where Jesus would be! Loving relationships are what should be our goal in our parish; getting to know one another and sharing our joys and sorrows. As well as the Friendship Group, other parish groups that involve being Christ to others are the St Vincent de Paul group, Lending a Hand and The Catholic Women's League. I wonder whether there might be more people who would be willing to spend some time and become involved and experience what these wonderful people do.

The helpers at the Friendship Group are: Pat Pfoeffler, Marie Ryan, Annette Dunn, Margaret Fitzpatrick, Mary Branagan, Mary Jones, Pauline McGrath, Janette Will, Paula Mason, Noelene Hammond and Maureen O'Sullivan.

Thanks to all for an uplifting and memorable experience.

John Dowd



"Music is the universal language of mankind".

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.



Charity, work and loyalty*

OLF's Catholic Women's League

Since our last edition of *The Bark* our members have held our Summer Fashion Parade. It was a fun afternoon. Many thanks to Stafford Fashions, our gorgeous models, our hairdresser and makeup ladies, our lovely catering team and those ladies who attended. You all helped us raise considerable funds which enabled us to give donations to "The Farm" at Galong and our branch of St Vincent de Paul.

Marlene Wallace's 90th Birthday Mass, morning tea and lunch were enjoyed by all. Two representatives from the City Branch, Sally Fennell and Tex Quirk, attended as well.

We participated in the Novena of the Rosary for Our Lady of Fatima Feast Day.

It was very sad to hear of the passing of Marie Cullen who was a devout and lovely lady; we are sure God has prepared a special place for her. We were honoured to be asked to form a Guard of Honour as her coffin left the church and we assisted in the preparations and serving at her Wake.

We will be helping One Meal by decorating pavlovas for the Christmas Party for their guests to be held at Riverwood Community Centre.

Our last gathering for the year ended with Christmas Lunch at Grandviews Bowling Club followed by the meeting and afternoon tea with a Christmas Cake made by Pat Macks.

Many thanks to Fran Simon for representing our group on the Parish Leadership Team this year.

We wish you all a Happy and Holy Christmas and send love to all your families.

****The motto of the Catholic Women's League***

Maureen Burgess and Pat Pfoeffler, Catholic Women's League.



Let's face the (financial) facts!

How different are the finances of the parish compared to your own household finances?

The answer is "not very different at all". The parish needs income to meet its everyday expenses in same way as every household does, and parish expenses are very similar to those of the average home.

However, there is one major difference, which is that the parish has little control over its income. Obviously, parishioners choose what to contribute, which is dependent on individual circumstances. This means that it is challenging to predict our income at any time.

Past history demonstrates that we are a very generous parish, but a key element missing is that there is no trigger that reminds us to review our regular contribution. As we all know, expenses continue to increase year on year; the end of the financial year might be an appropriate time for us to take stock and see if we are able to contribute a little more. **How long is it since you increased your contribution?**

Therefore, it is important that parishioners understand more about parish finances in order to understand why, and how, they can respond.

Hopefully the following questions/answers will assist.

Question: What is the average cost to operate our parish?

Answer: for the year to June 2023, total expenses were close to \$200,000, an average of approximately \$3,850 per week.

What are the main items of expenditure?

Answer: Wages, insurance, maintenance of parish facilities, rates, water and funding of outreach.

Question: Where does our income come from?

Answer: All income is sourced from within our parish. Currently, the primary source is from parishioner contributions, which represent around 70% of total income. The balance comes from sources over which we have little control e.g., monthly markets, hall rental and interest from term deposits.

Question: How do parishioners provide their contributions?

Answer: Currently 53% of parishioner contributions are provided via monthly credit card. The balance comes from the second collection at Mass - 20% from envelopes and 27% from cash collections.

Question: What is the parish's preferred method of collecting parishioner contributions?

Answer: Monthly credit card payment is the preferred collection method. The advantages of the monthly credit card collection are:

- It is the least costly method. There is no cost involved from the parish's standpoint, whereas the cost of printing envelopes is significant and the cost and issues with transporting and depositing both of the cash methods are becoming more difficult, and costly.
- Reduction of impact on the Parish Secretary's workload. Credit cards involve minimal processing as it is largely automated and once a month, as opposed to the other methods, which require weekly processing.
- Provides guaranteed income for the parish. Other methods require parishioners to remember to submit their contributions.

Question: How much of the first collection at Mass goes to parish?

Answer: None of the Pastoral Revenue Collection, the first collection during Mass, is retained by the parish. Instead, a stipend is paid to our MGL priests from this collection with the balance transferred each quarter to the Clergy Remuneration Fund, for the benefit of poorer parishes in the Sydney Archdiocese.

Question: How much is transferred to Clergy Remuneration Fund on average?

Answer: For the quarter to September 2023, \$5,354 was transferred to the Clergy Remuneration Fund, the equivalent of \$412 per week.

We thank all those parishioners who currently contribute financially to our parish. If you are not yet a regular contributor but wish to support your parish in this way, please contact Clarissa at the Parish Office on (02) 9533 2594 or email office@ourladyoffatima.com.au

Tony Thorpe, Chair, Finance Committee



This December 2023 issue of **The Bark** is brought to you by:

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How to contribute to the Bark

Articles: please submit your articles as a Word document (not as a pdf.) or as hand-written copy. Articles may be edited for reasons of space; you will be given an opportunity to review your work before publication if this occurs.

Photographs: please submit medium /high resolution photos with captions provided.

Send your articles or suggestions via email to Julia Goff at goffam1@optusnet.com.au

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