



BISHOP PAUL IN BEAUFORT

The second part of Bishop Paul's Visitation to the Beaufort Parish of St John the Baptist was on Friday, February 15 with a visit to the Beaufort Campus of the Beaufort and Skipton Health Services in the afternoon and a meeting with the Parish Pastoral Council in the evening.

Bernadette Franc, Chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council reflects:

I welcome an opportunity to share with Bishop Paul the dedication of our Parish Council Members and our St John the Baptist Catholic Community of Beaufort. We are a very small group who meet every Sunday for Mass or a Lay Led Assembly. Like all similar parishes our numbers have dwindled over the past twenty years, however our numbers are currently quite consistent. In fact, more recently it seems our numbers are growing. I acknowledge that our ability to maintain our current Mass and Lay Led Roster has facilitated this.



As Chairperson since June 2012, it is worth noting that our committee is small in number and that our roles do not change greatly. We have been very fortunate over this period to have extremely talented people on our committee. More broadly speaking our entire community are very committed and prepared to help out in any way they can, especially in these times when regular church-going numbers have declined.

Parish Council endeavours to meet on a monthly basis. A regular practice at our monthly meetings has been to focus each month on what we believe to be the purpose of our Council. These are documented in our Parish Information Booklet and our Guidelines.

The *Looking Forward* Project in the Diocese for 2014 gave us an opportunity to survey our community. In short, we sought to find out what was working well, what needed improving and what we would want most.

We selected Goals of Evangelisation and Improvement. We have managed, throughout this period, to focus our Evangelisation Goal on our Youth, especially with last year being the Year of Youth, which Bishop Paul attending our [parish youth night back in July](#).

Our Improvement Goal to encourage more parishioners to take up ministry roles has developed. Likewise, we have been successful in securing new members of Parish Council who add excellent expertise to an already talented team.

We were successful in applying for a Diocesan Grant along with the Parish of Linton in 2017. This money was used to engage Richard Leonard (Jesuit priest) for a local Mission. This took place in October and was very much valued by our local community as well as the Linton Parish. His sessions were run in both parishes at times that suited the respective communities. People also travelled from other localities to attend. The Mission was deemed a great success.

Another major project of late has been the revision of our Parish Information Booklet. Thanks to Sr Helen and Gabrielle Brennan for their work in making this a great resource for our Parish, and especially any new Parishioners.

We have completed a range of tasks to bring us up to date with Diocesan requirements in relation to Professional Standards, especially Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults. We have also worked on a range of policy documents which are displayed in the appropriate places (ie Parish Centre and the Church). Special thanks to Sandra Watkins for her work as Parish Safety Officer.

A very significant feature of our community is our involvement in ecumenical gatherings. To this end, last year and again this year, we will be inviting our neighbouring St John the Baptist Anglican community to join us for Mass and Morning Tea on the Sunday closest to the Nativity of St John the Baptist in June.

We also hosted the Pyrenees Chorale Ecumenical Christmas Gathering on December 5, which involved input from all the local churches and was well-attended.

Our church was also selected to stage a performance as part of the Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields, which was held recently. Organisation for this event involved not only members of our faith community, but also of the broader Beaufort community.

On a couple of occasions we have opened our doors to the public to come and pray in their own time. These have been held around the time of Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Open Door day was held in respect of the Year of Mercy.

In May this year we will once again celebrate a Parish Mass and Gathering at Cave Hill Creek. Our last Parish Gathering at Cave Hill in March 2017 was well-attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all. We also endeavour to facilitate as many opportunities to come together for morning teas.

Since arriving in Beaufort, Fr Sajan Matthew has offered daily Mass at 9.30 am on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. He has also been introduced to the Hospital and has indicated his availability should anyone need his ministry. Fr Sajan has settled in well and is an active member of Parish Council. He is helping us in many ways.

Since my time on Parish Council, we had the privilege of providing accommodation for Sr Shelia Belleville RSM and Sr Helen Murphy IBVM. Both Sisters were well thought of by the general community and did great things for our faith community. Their contribution was outstanding.

Sadly last year we lost two vital members of our community. So I wish to say a word of gratitude for the dedicated service of both Michael O'Connor (RIP) and John Fitzpatrick (RIP). They are both deeply missed and have left huge gaps in the day to day and week to week running of our Parish.

Recently, we have been able to update our Parish Webpage on the Diocesan Website with a revised 'History of Our Church'. Special thanks to Maurice Barwick for this work, which was initially shared with our Youth as part of our recognition of the Year of Youth, during Bishop Paul's Visit to our Parish in July.

To conclude, I would like to pay tribute to all current and past parishioners who over the years have done so much to both, serve and preserve our Parish of St John the Baptist. Over the years our Church functioned because of various committees such as Parish Council, Liturgy Group, RE Classes and the Altar Society. We wouldn't be who we are today without them! Today we are holding our own, but with fewer committees and less people. We are a small, active faith community with a long history, who today continue to welcome all to share in the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments in our Church.

I would like to say a special 'thank you' to Fr Justin, who for several years now, in his role as our Administrator, has been a great source of strength, advice and affirmation of our little community. Thank you Fr Justin.

Photo: Bishop Paul with the Parish Pastoral Council includes Maurice Barwick, Gail Hall, John Jess, Gabrielle Brennan, Bernadette Franc and Fr Sajan