

St Michael's Meadowbank Catholic Parish

2017

Stewardship

of

God's Gifts

St Michael's Meadowbank Parish Financial Report
(Financial Year ending 30 June 2017,
with preliminary figures to 31 December 2017.)

"Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." - 2 Corinthians 9:7-8

www.stmichaelsmeadowbank.org.au

My Dear Parishioners,

Since arriving in the Parish in November 2017, I have been overjoyed by the welcome and support that parishioners have extended to me. Serving at Saint Michael's Parish Meadowbank has been a true blessing. Your kindness, hospitality and willingness to adapt are signs that this community has been deeply formed to be participants in the building of God's kingdom. Despite the challenges of moving, settling and learning a new parish and meeting new parishioners, it is incredibly life-giving to serve here at this parish. It is life-giving because



of the incredible number of people who have responded to the call of the Gospel to become followers of Jesus Christ; to become, as Pope Francis is fond of saying, missionary disciples. There are well over 130 people who are involved in active ministries within our parish and many others participate through your prayers and your contributions to our parish and community.

There is something deeply satisfying when we know that despite our many flaws and weaknesses that each person has been called by God to fulfil a specific purpose and mission as part of God's kingdom here on earth. If you are still discerning how you fulfil this purpose and mission, or if you have taken a vacation or an extended snooze from the mission, know that it is never too late to become active in God's kingdom again.

As we prepare during the first few months of 2018 to grow and then increase the number of active parishioners who participate in ministry and parish outreach in the Meadowbank and West Ryde areas, we all need to pray and grow in our own abilities to mature, equip and shepherd those who will join our community in the future. We are in a parish that it is perfectly placed to become a shining light to the whole country. We have young families who are moving into our parish area for education and work opportunities. We have young couples who are beginning their life and families together in the ever-developing high-rise apartments, and we also have well-established families and parishioners who have been the backbone of our parish for decades. Our community and parish have a strong history, a stable present and a hopeful future.

Every person, both Catholic and non-Catholic, needs to know that they are part of a community. Unlike focussed community groups, such as schools, sporting, music or book clubs, the parish is a model that supports human flourishing at every moment of existence. As Christians we are called to not only worship God, but also to be witnesses to the presence of God in our suburbs through charity and outreach to those less fortunate than ourselves. By attracting, inviting and welcoming outsiders to our community and by teaching and explaining the joys of Christian living, we help to bring about God's kingdom here on earth.

Now you have read this far, I ask that you now consider how we could attract, invite and welcome people to our parish who are not Catholics and people who have left or walked away from regular worship at our parish over the years. The mission, responsibility and ideas to build God's kingdom are shared by all of us. Please pray to develop an idea, an invitation, an event or a concept that may attract someone in our area to Jesus Christ and our parish during 2018 and beyond.

It takes a robust team of staff and volunteers to maintain a parish and you as parishioners have made this possible by your giving of your time, talent and treasure. Make no mistake - Your financial contributions to our parish have saved and transformed lives in the past and will transform lives in the future. Because of your giving we are fulfilling the mission that Jesus gave to us. Thank you for participating in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Within the pages of this report you will find not just the numbers and information necessary to satisfy the need for accountability and transparency in financial matters, but also a clear testament to the fruit of your giving in our parish. As we look ahead at the current year, I ask that you continue to reflect on how the Lord is calling you to support the mission of our parish so that the Kingdom of God can grow in our midst. Is not the mission of Christ so much more exciting than simply paying the electricity and insurance bills?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James McCarthy".

Fr James McCarthy
Parish Administrator
19 March, 2018

Finance at St Michael's Meadowbank

with Stephen Topples and the Parish Finance Committee

Like you and me, the Parish at St Michael's must pay its way and parish resources must be managed. The Parish Priest, or in our case the Administrator, has the responsibility to do this. He is assisted by the Parish Finance Committee. Myself and a handful of other parishioners make up this committee.



Look around the parish. The church, the Bush Hall and most of the school and car park have been built by the parish community with monies raised from parishioners or by loans repaid with parishioner donations. The last loan by the parish was for the Bush Hall. The Finance Committee considers the resources available to manage the parish. This includes monitoring the collections to see if they cover the parish commitments such as the priests' stipend, electricity and insurance, telephone, altar bread, candles and repairs and maintenance. The Committee also oversees developments such as the financing and construction of the Bush Hall and the remediation of our parish block of land to resume its use as a car park.

I have been in the parish for close to forty years and my children went to school at St Michael's. My wife Jennifer played the organ at the Sunday Mass for some years. You may see me mostly at the 8am Mass where I am rostered as an Acolyte.

It is necessary and important to be involved in one's parish. Our faith calls for more than Mass on Sunday. The parish, my parish, as our Christian community, requires an ongoing commitment. I see it as part of my faith to use my talents to contribute to the life of the parish. Therefore, over the years I have tried to contribute where my skills permit.

What is a Parish Finance Committee?

The Parish Finance Committee, a committee required by Church law, is a consultative body of the Parish, presided over by the Parish Priest and consists of diverse members of the Parish community, who share and offer advice and consultation to the Parish Priest. The Finance Committee seeks to lessen the burden of the Parish Priest in his role of administering parish finances, in maintaining parish properties, in planning for future capital works, in raising necessary finances and in establishing a framework for greater shared responsibility within parish life.

My involvement with the Finance Committee commenced when Fr John Alt was Parish Priest. I commenced chairing the Finance Committee when Father Peni was appointed. For many years I was the parish representative on the St Michael's Primary School Finance Committee. I have also been an acolyte for more than 25 years.

Stephen Topples
Chairperson
Parish Finance Committee

Regular Weekly Giving

The chart below may assist you, along with your prayerful consideration, as to the amount of your weekly Sunday offering:

INCOME VS PROPORTIONAL GIVING

A Suggested Total Weekly Gift to the Church should take into account the 1st, 2nd and special collections that occur throughout the year.

In Catholic Parishes, we have 3 main areas of regular giving.

- 1. First Collection at Mass** - Assists with the stipend of the priest (\$18,500 p.a.) and food expenses for the priest. Also assists with the expenses of the Archbishop and priest expenses at other parishes and chaplaincies that are unable to raise sufficient funds to assist with the expenses of a priest.

The Parish has a break-even budget to raise \$1350 per week in 2018 for the first collection.

- 2. Second Collection at Mass and Parish Planned Giving** (Envelopes/Direct Debit/Credit Card giving) - Assists in the Expenses of the Parish: staff, utilities, church and altar, repairs and maintenance of church, presbytery and site, insurance, pastoral and sacramental programs. Contributions receive a 25% Tax deduction.

The Parish has a break-even budget to raise \$1900 per week in 2018 on the second collection.

- 3. Occasional Special Collections** - for the Archdiocesan Charitable Works Fund Appeal and other Catholic charitable activities. Contributions receive a 100% tax deduction.

Annual Combined Household Income	1%	5%	10%
\$10,000	\$2	\$10	\$19
\$15,000	\$3	\$14	\$29
\$20,000	\$4	\$19	\$38
\$25,000	\$5	\$24	\$48
\$30,000	\$6	\$29	\$58
\$35,000	\$7	\$34	\$67
\$40,000	\$8	\$38	\$77
\$50,000	\$10	\$48	\$96
\$60,000	\$12	\$58	\$115
\$70,000	\$13	\$67	\$135
\$80,000	\$15	\$77	\$154
\$90,000	\$17	\$87	\$173
\$100,000	\$19	\$96	\$192
\$120,000	\$23	\$115	\$231
\$150,000	\$29	\$144	\$288

Please note: Although St Michael's Meadowbank Primary School is connected to the St Michael's Meadowbank Parish, there is no income or reimbursement that the Parish receives from the School to assist in providing the liturgical, pastoral and facility support that the Parish provides to the School and the families who attend the School. Furthermore, the Parish lay and priestly staff are funded entirely from parishioner contributions at Sunday Mass and not from School Fees or any levy charged by the School.

*“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?
Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”*

1 Chronicles 29:14

Direct Transfer Giving

Please consider using a direct recurring automatic transfer for regular Sunday offerings. It is a safe, secure process that each person can easily setup via their own online banking to give to the parish on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.

The Parish First Collection account details are as follows:

BSB: 062 784; Account Number: 04292002;

Account Name: St Michael's Pastoral Revenue Account

The Parish Second Collection account details are as follows:

BSB: 062 784; Account Number: 04292000;

Account Name: St Michael's Church Account

Those who use Direct Transfer or Credit Card can still choose to receive parish envelopes. Please let the parish office know that you intend to use credit card or transfer giving so that you can be given a giver number and your giving can be linked to your name for tax deduction purposes.

Please note: The Parish does not strongly encourage large credit card giving, although the parish has a facility to help process donations in some situations. Credit card debt can be a terrible burden on a family and the parish would prefer that parishioners give from their savings and not give while adding to their debt. Please also be mindful that the bank charges the Parish a 7% credit card transaction fee per donation.

The Fruit of our Giving – Liturgical Ministry

A Journey of Parish Faith and Service with Sue Metzmacher
(Chairperson of the Parish Liturgy Committee)

Helmut and I moved to Melrose Park and became parishioners of St Michael's Meadowbank in July 1969 – our first child was born one month later. At first I felt quite isolated as we had no close family living in Australia but I soon realised we were part of a wonderful, caring parish community.

After our third child was born in 1974 and with our first son starting school at St Michael's Primary, I began to take a more active role in the parish, joining the school's Ladies Auxiliary and becoming a catechist. By 1976 I was also an active member of The Walkabout Group – we used the Department of Health mini-buses to pick-up local nursing home



residents and take them out for the day, monthly on Sundays, providing afternoon tea wherever we happened to be. I'm sure I was prompted to do this because my mother was, at that time, hospitalised and in a coma for some time in my home town of London. I couldn't do anything practical to help her so channelled my energy and emotions into doing the kind of things she did throughout her life. At this time, I was invited to assist at certain Masses with distribution of Communion, which truly was a privilege.

Around this time, three or four of us school mums started the Children's Liturgy at 10am Sunday Masses – this was on a monthly basis. Soon after, when my son was in Year 6, I investigated forming a youth group in the parish. I visited a couple of parishes and used the model from Wyoming in the Gosford area where our family were often visitors at the church. SMYG's operated successfully for a number of years – I have to admit it had more of a social rather than spiritual nature. During this time, I was fostering (part time) 6yr old twins from a neighbouring Catholic mother who had mental health problems.

By 1981 my three children were attending different schools and I was involved at these in a variety of ways. For the next ten years I was not so involved in parish then Fr Langtry invited me to join the parish liturgy group and that has remained my primary focus up to the present time.

If I ask myself why I took on these "tasks" I can only believe it was my mother's influence on my life together with other role models in the parish and with the encouragement of Sr Margaret our Pastoral Care person at the time.

St Michael's became my adopted family and I wanted to give back some of the kindnesses and generosity shown to me and my family here. Also, my mother was very active in our local and parish community by the time we were teenagers, helping many people in different ways. She wouldn't say "No" to anyone unless it was almost impossible for her to assist. She was and is a role model for me even though she died many years ago. My family had a fairly hard life during and after World War II but received assistance from a number of people and we knew, without being told, that you don't take without giving back when and where you can.

Whilst my husband, Helmut, doesn't get overly involved in similar activities, he has always been very supportive in many ways.

Parish Financial Reports

Figures of June 30, 2017 Year End Financial Report, 6 month preliminary figures (July-December 2017) and 6 Month Budget for 2018 year with comparative Statement of Income/Expenditure for 2014-2016.

Note:

The budget for 6 months of 2018 was prepared after taking into consideration the targets and goals for the previous 4 years and as per the mission and objectives of Saint Michael's Parish Finance Committee. The total receipts are matched for funding on the various religious, liturgical and pastorals ministries after allocating required funds for parish administration and maintenance of the parish building and grounds as well as presbytery & living expenses and provision for the payment of interest and the amount to be paid with respect to the Charitable Works Fund assessment shortfall.

	ACTUAL					BUDGET
	2014	2015	2016	2017	July-Dec 2017	Jan-June 2018
Parish Income						
Envelope/2nd Collections	77,794	84,817	91,450	79,106	33,004	37,700
Candles (Net)	-	-	1,520	3,799	1,279	1,400
Donations/ Bequests Received	955	379	4,155	2,940	6,030	1,000
Bank Interest and Distributions *1	54,390	51,270	32,075	32,486	15,776	22,410
Other Operating Receipts *2	5,250	11,000	11,000	11,000	5,000	15,000
Total operating receipts	138,389	147,466	140,200	129,331	61,089	77,510

*1 Catholic Church Insurances and the Catholic Development Fund Sydney give an annual distribution to Parishes.

*2 The Parish receives income from leasing the Parish Hall for After School Care.

The Hall rental arrangements were renegotiated in November 2017 so that the Parish will receive a larger percentage of income, reflecting the parish contribution to the construction of the Bush Hall.

	ACTUAL (1 July to 30 June)				ACTUAL	BUDGET
	2014	2015	2016	2017	July-Dec 2017	Jan-June 2018
Parish Expenditure						
Altar Bread/Wine/Candles & Liturgy items *3	3,108	5,551	3,931	3,863	1,847	1,893
Electricity, Gas, Water, Garbage	2,716	3,138	3,739	4,031	2,628	2,694
Insurance	15,968	15,114	16,104	16,546	17,051	-
Charitable Works Fund Shortfall	6,958	(464)	1,222	1,556	(86)	(88)
Travelling/Car Expenses	18,706	12,933	13,621	10,858	5,447	5,583
Office/Printing Expenses *4	4,494	4,843	4,430	4,630	2,373	994
Property Repairs & Maintenance	6,438	7,456	5,658	6,404	3,179	4,696
Staff Salaries/Superannuation *5	46,147	56,252	58,077	56,559	27,429	30,115
Pastoral Expenses *6	869	1,477	376	(1,899)	(2,377)	(1,000)
Donations Given	650	250	515	10		-
Other Operating Expenses	23,920	15,353	13,310	10,755	7,025	7,201
Total operating expenditure	129,974	121,903	120,983	113,313	64,516	52,088
Non-operating expenditure *7	11,113	19,411	300,184	9,800	2,163	2,217
NET Surplus (Deficit)	(2,698)	6,152	(280,967)	6,218	(5,590)	25,421

EXPLANATORY Notes:

*3 Royalties/Copyright licences for music & audio/visual, vestments and altar utensils, church decorations, candles, Mass wine, altar breads, sacristy supplies and liturgical supplies.

*4 Office supplies, printing and stationary, photocopy costs, bulletin costs, maintenance of office equipment, postage, costs of communications via telephone, internet and banking charges.

*5 Includes the payroll costs of two part-time lay parish staff and the superannuation and motor vehicle costs for the clergy. Clergy Stipend (\$18,500 p.a.) is paid from the Pastoral Revenue (First Collection) account.

*6 The Parish recovers some of the costs associated with Lenten Programs, Sacramental Programs and Catechist Programs in State Schools.

*7 The building of the parish carpark, and other major capital works are listed under non-operating expenditure.

Budget Surplus over the next 5 Years

If the financial situation at the end of the 2017 financial year and at the end of December 2017 continued for the next 5 years and there were no adjustments, then the parish would be in significant financial difficulty, with expected deficits between \$10,000-\$30,000p.a for the Parish, and deficits of \$15,000 to \$20,000 on the first collection.

The Parish Finance Committee is planning for improvements to the parish's financial viability over the next 12 months. The Finance Committee has already implemented measures to inform the parish of a weekly collections target via the Parish Bulletin, have renegotiated the Parish Hall usage for After-School-Care and have implemented stronger oversight of expenditure. Assuming that these three measures are successful, then the parish should generate a surplus of \$15,000 p.a. over the next 5 years. It is anticipated that once a surplus is generated, then additional pastoral programs and initiatives could be considered.

Parish Giving stays with the Parish

In recent months, the Catholic Church in Australia has attracted considerable media attention in relation to the finances of the Catholic Church. The Church is committed to the National Redress Scheme for Survivors of Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney has already earmarked income from certain investments for this purpose.

However, it is very important for parishioners to know that donations given for parish purposes will be used for parish purposes.

Various figures have been suggested in the media regarding the supposed assets of the Catholic Church in Sydney and beyond. Some of these figures are inflated and deceiving. For instance, if St Mary's Cathedral is valued as a potential site for a Westfield or a high rise apartment development, it may appear to be of enormous value; however, its value is as a spiritual and artistic patrimony of the Church and our nation. Rather than being an income earning 'asset,' the Cathedral and most historic churches cost a great deal to maintain.

The Catholic Church is much more than our buildings – we are principally our people and the works of the Church. The Catholic Church is the nation's largest non-government provider of pastoral care, primary and secondary schooling, tertiary education, healthcare, marriage preparation and counselling, social welfare services especially to the poor, aged care and palliative care. In some of these areas, the Catholic Church makes an even bigger contribution than any government in Australia. If the Church wasn't doing our mission, who would?

Some examples of the vital works of the Catholic Church are:

- The Catholic Church is the largest non-government provider of health care services in Australia, including aged and community services.
- St Vincent's Health Australia, for example, is the nation's largest not-for-profit Catholic health and aged care provider. It is a clinical, research and education leader working in private hospitals, public hospitals and aged care services – for all people.
- The Catholic Church provides social and welfare services to more than a million Australians a year including more than 500 programs in the areas of disability, children and youth services, counselling, employment, parental assistance, refugees and assistance to the homeless.
- In education the current recurrent savings to NSW and Commonwealth Governments of not having to educate Catholic Systemic school students in state schools exceeds \$483 million per annum.
- The Catholic Church has also built much of our country's social infrastructure in these and other areas. It continues to build and sustain local communities of faith and service, and to support families and individuals where there is often little other support. It cares for the most disadvantaged and is a voice for the voiceless. It provides most of these things for our whole society, Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

But the Church can only do these good things for our community because generation after generation of Catholics have built up the infrastructure of churches, schools, convents, Vinnies centres and the rest that people call 'Church assets'. Many 'Church assets' are in fact held on trust for specific purposes nominated by the government or benefactors who provided them (e.g. school grants, money earmarked for charitable works). Others are held to back employee entitlements, debts etc. Others again (like our cathedral) are artistic patrimony of the Church, city and nation. In all these cases the Church is not free to just dispose of the assets as it pleases and it is misleading to lump all these things together as "the wealth of the Church".

Legacy and Bequest Giving

What we do with the gifts we have been given expresses what we believe. A legacy or a bequest is a gift left for the benefit of future generations. As good stewards, a Legacy program ensures that future needs of our Church and ministries are met. Our Christian faith, even in death, calls us to witness the new life that God gives in Christ through his death and resurrection.

A gift to the Parish Legacy Program may take many forms such as:

- Lump sum bequests or percentage of your estate as stated in your Will
- Beneficiary of Life Insurance, Superannuation or Tax Free Savings Account
- Gifts of cash or publicly traded shares during your lifetime
- Bequest of a specific asset such as real estate, jewellery or shares in your will.

Gifts may be made by individuals, families, organizations and/or corporations. These gifts may be directed to the general revenues of the Parish or to any specific ministry within the Parish such as:

- Debt reduction • Youth and Education • Music • Liturgy
- Adult Faith Formation • Evangelization • Outreach

By making a bequest to the Church, you can also elect to contribute to a specific important work of the Church, for example the Charitable Works Fund, The Priests Retirement Foundation, The Clerical Medical Fund of the Archdiocese of Sydney or the Clergy Remuneration System of the Archdiocese of Sydney.

For your final wishes to be honoured, you must have a valid Will. For this reason, it is very important that you arrange to have a valid Will drawn up by a solicitor. To learn more or discuss your Legacy Giving please contact the parish office.

Cardinal Gilroy Society

The Cardinal Gilroy Society has been established to honour the generosity of those individuals who have pledged a bequest to any of the good works of the Sydney Archdiocese. The Society is a way that we can thank you now for your foresight and very special contribution. Cardinal George Pell is the patron of the Society.

The Society is named after Cardinal Norman Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney from 1940 to 1971. Cardinal Gilroy made a significant contribution to Australian society and to the Catholic community. He was a veteran of Gallipoli, was ordained a priest in Rome, became the first Australian-born Cardinal and the first Cardinal since the reformation to receive a knighthood. In 1970 he was named Australian of the Year.



Members of *The Cardinal Gilroy Society* receive invitations to special events, a unique pin and a certificate. There is no cost or obligation for membership. If you are interested in joining, please contact the Bequest Manager of the Archdiocese of Sydney on 1800 753 959 or email bequests@sydneycatholic.org

To date, Saint Michael's Parish has received generous Legacy Gifts in the last 10 years from our former now deceased parishioners.

Thank you to the following:

2006 - \$241,943 – 50% of the Estate of Annie Irene Starkey

2017 - \$5080 – Estate of Sespem Shidrawi

Mortgage and Debt Reduction

The current balance of our parish debt is \$0. Due to the incredible generosity of many generations of parishioners, the Parish is currently not in any debt. However the Parish has very little savings, and the income generated from these savings currently means the Parish would find it difficult to undertake any new developments. New pastoral initiatives or developments will require additional funding and may also involve future loans for the parish.

In the early days of the Parish and until very recently (January 2017) the Parish has been responsible for a variety of loans, including loans for the building of the Church, the Bush Parish Hall, the building of the parish carpark, for the building and refurbishment of St Michael's Meadowbank Primary School and so on. From 1 January 2017, the loan balance of \$177,441 still owing for the Bush Parish Hall was transferred to St Michael's Primary School as part of a restructure of the Parish Building Levies and the Parish School Building Funds.

Workplace Giving and Donation Matching

More and more Australian companies are undertaking employee matched giving programs. In fact close to 70% of companies in Australia now support their employees fundraising efforts and/or workplace giving by matching the contribution.

What is workplace giving?

Workplace Giving is a joint relationship between employers, employees and registered charities. Individuals contribute a small portion of their pre-tax salary to a charity that offers a tax deduction. The individual will then receive the tax benefit straight away rather than waiting until the end of the financial year to submit a tax return. For example, if you donate \$20, it will only cost you \$12.60 (if you are on a high income) but the charity will receive the full \$20. In most cases, employers will also match staff donations dollar for dollar, so the value of your donation will double to \$40 direct to the charity of your choice.

If you don't know if your employer will match your donations, then ask your Human Resources Department if your company has a matched giving program. If you work for a medium or large-sized company, then more than likely they will match your donations to charities, to special collections and to the Parish.

25% of regular Parish donations are eligible for tax deductions and 100% of Charitable Works Fund donations receive tax deductions. You and your employer could consider supporting the Charitable Works Fund or the Parish through matched giving.



Special Collections



2014-2017

CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER COLLECTIONS	2,014	2,015	2,016	2,017
Pastoral Revenue (Weekly 1st Collection – to Support Clergy)	52,278	58,708	58,967	56,786
Charitable Works Fund (CWF – Archdiocese of Sydney)	12,712	16,222	11,443	11,494
Caritas Project Compassion Lenten Appeal	6,959	8,537	6,600	8,455
Priests Retirement Foundation	4,316	1,559	3,202	2,039
Catholic Mission	1,246	1,623	3,565	2,105
Holy Father's Annual Appeal	546	1,013	870	478
Holy Places - Good Friday	2,044	2,100	1,827	1,789
Other Appeals	1,326	539	886	644
St Vincent De Paul Society	18,540	12,275	13,860	12,849
TOTAL COLLECTED FOR NON PARISH RELATED CAUSES	34,977	27,646	30,810	28,359
TOTAL COLLECTED FOR CWF and 1st Collection	64,990	74,930	70,410	68,280
TOTAL COLLECTED FOR THE PARISH	77,794	84,817	92,970	82,905
GRAND TOTAL COLLECTED IN THE PARISH Per Annum	177,761	187,393	194,190	179,544
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Percentage of Parish Giving to Non Parish Causes	20%	15%	16%	16%
Percentage of 1st Collection Giving	29%	31%	30%	32%
Percentage of Parish Giving for Parish	44%	45%	48%	46%



CHARITABLE WORKS FUND

Archdiocesan Charitable Works Fund Appeal

Every year the Archdiocese of Sydney assesses parishes and determines an annual quote that each parish needs to raise for the Charitable Works Fund. The Charitable Works Fund (CWF) supports CatholicCare; CCD (ministry expenses for catechists in state schools); Ephpheta Centre for the Hearing Impaired; Aboriginal Catholic Ministry; and Seminaries, University and Hospital Chaplaincies. The CWF assists in furthering our mission of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to all corners of Sydney.

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” Luke 6:38

My Spiritual Journey

Connie Buttigieg

My name is Connie – I guess you all know me by now. Only with the grace of God I am here. I have been an active member of the St Michael's Church Community for 30 years.



God has led me to some very interesting places and I feel I've done some great things since I found God – OR did He find me? Am I drawn or am I driven? I don't know but I am here.

Spending time with God at Mass is the most important thing to me. I rely on God with everything that I do. Mass gives me so much joy and peace. It's my sanctuary. I go to Our Lady to protect my family and know they are in good hands.

I have met some interesting people over this time, from all walks of life. I have learnt so much from them. Many are now my close friends. I love my friends at St Michael's and without them

I can't do anything.

One of the most moving experiences for me at St Michael's was World Youth Day in 2008. St Michael's was rich in warm hospitality towards the people who came who were from all walks of life. I remember as clear as day a young man, a priest, getting off the bus and asking me to take him to the Pope as he NEEDED to speak with him. "Sure", I said, "but we need a helicopter!" I truly felt like Phillip in the Bible, when two Greeks got off the boat wanting to see Jesus. Father John Langtry allowed us the freedom to welcome these people in a way that only St Michael's can with joy, sincerity and generous hospitality. It was a great week. People opened their doors and hearts to accept visitors, strangers really, to stay with them in their homes. The community fed them, clothed them and loved them.

I am grateful too for the many other priests who've led and guided our community. Father Alt was a great inspiration and help in my life. I have no education and he saw the goodness in me, and even more than that, he ignited the spark in me. I am forever grateful to him for this.

I'm also grateful to Father Peni. In fact, the most memorable time for me at St Michael's happened shortly after Father Peni arrived – when he decided to open and bless the Bush Hall. He was so open and willing to do this because he heard so much about Father Bush and wanted to pay him the respect that he deserved. This humble act from one priest to another made such a profound impact on me and brought tears to my eyes at the time and remembering it still does.

Yes, all the priests I have had the privilege of knowing have all been wonderful – Father Phan, Father Kene and now Father James. To me Father James is the most exciting priest I have met. He is warm and very caring. He is dedicated, determined, creative,

kind and full of the Holy Spirit. He is a great guide and he has truly moved me beyond words. I am so grateful to him for showering our community with all of his gifts.

Knowing Jesus gives me great joy. I have grown to love Him more and more each day. He brings sunshine to my life and when David wrote the Psalm “The Lord is my Shepherd there is nothing I shall want”, I understand what he means as life has its ups and downs and whether I am sitting at the well with Jesus, or at the foot of the Cross, my words are “into your hands I commend my spirit”. And, as St Augustine said, “my heart is restless Lord, until it rests in You”.

I pray for peace because without God there is no peace – because my four children and my four grandchildren have to live in this world. I have been married for 50 years this year. My husband is still hiding from God, but God knows where he lives!

At Mass Jesus is at the last supper and He sacrifices Himself for us. No other man has done this for us. So I thank you Jesus. Thank you St Michael’s for giving me the most precious gift – your friendship and I have so many priests and people to thank. For my spiritual journey, God has blessed me mightily and I can only repay Him with my love...

“There are many rooms in my Father’s house”... I pray I have a room next to Jesus.

Did You Know?

- Our parish electricity and utilities bill in October 2017 was \$2,100.
- We have over **130 volunteers** serving in ministry.
- Over **130 tax receipts** were issued for 2017 donations.
- **107 guests** attended the Parish Volunteers Thank You Luncheon in December 2017.
- **146 families** were involved in the Parish Sacramental Programs in 2017 and **160 children** made First Reconciliation, First Communion or Confirmation in 2017.
- **330 children** with 75% of these being Catholics attended St Michael’s Meadowbank Primary School in 2017.
- Our current Catechists have a combined **117 years of service**.
- **240 children received weekly classes** in Catholic Scripture at the 3 Public Schools in the Parish (Meadowbank Public, West Ryde Public, Ermington Public).
- It costs approx. **\$700/year to supply donation envelopes** to parishioners.
- In a typical month we use approximately **3,500 hosts** at a cost of \$150 each month.
- During a typical month, **22 sick and homebound parishioners** are visited and brought Holy Communion on a weekly basis.

A few Final Words from Rose Dearden

Our parish has been uplifted spiritually since Fr James McCarthy came to our parish in November 2017. God has certainly heard our prayers and given us Fr James to help each one of us to go deeper in our journey to faith in Jesus Christ.

Fr James' leadership and guidance will stir our parish to its former glory of being a centre of spirituality, worship, fellowship and to become a shining light to the whole country. This could only eventuate with the full support of the whole parish community. Hence I call on each one of you to share your God given gifts, talents, blessings and most importantly please give your financial support. The future of our parish will depend on you.

By giving, we worship God and strengthen our community, as every gift blesses others. Many thanks for your generosity and may God continue to bless you and your family!!!

Rose Dearden
Parish Accountant and Finance Committee Member

Prayer

Lord God, we give thanks for the inspiration of your Holy Spirit as we reflect on the Gospel call to exercise Christ's stewardship on our journey of faith. We ask you to guide us in our discernment, and show us how to be faithful in the plans we make, the actions we take, and the love we share on our pilgrim way. Give us the courage to find wisdom in our sacrifices, joy in our generosity, and hope in the compassion we show, especially to those most in need of your comfort and care. And create in us a more open heart and a greater awareness of our need to grow, to change, to be transformed, so that we may be better stewards of your gifts for the good of all.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.