

Declan's Well

ISSUE NO. 6

Q U A R T E R L Y

OCTOBER 2020

PRAISE & WORSHIP NIGHT



ST DECLAN'S
— CATHOLIC CHURCH —

CELEBRATING
LOVE **P5**

STORIES AT
THE WELL **P6**

LET US
PRAY **P22**

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Residents of Ferndale Gardens are seen here watching a St Declan's live stream Mass, above.

A big THANK YOU to the many parishioners volunteering their time for cleaning and ushering duties, helping to keep St Declan's a COVID-SAFE environment. Here is Marilyn on pen cleaning duties, right.



October 2020

Welcome to *Declan's Well*, our quarterly e-magazine where we share stories about the wonderful people and activities in our parish, as we journey together in faith and love of Jesus.

COVER: Our first Praise & Worship night live-streamed from St Declan's church with Deacon Cameron and Mirella Cassis providing the music.

Cover photo: Darren McDowell

Stay in touch - follow us on Instagram



SUNDAY MASS

Saturday Vigil 6pm
Sunday 7am, 9am,
11am, 4.30pm & 6pm

Register online to
attend [here](#)

WEEKDAY MASS

Mon & Frid 6.45am
Tues & Thurs 9.15am
Wednesday 5.30pm,
Saturday 8am

Sign in on arrival

St Declan's Catholic Church

92 Penshurst St, PENSHURST NSW 2222
(02) 9580 1310 | office@stdeclansparish.org

ALL WELCOME!

If you need more information about St Declan's, or want to become a member, contact Frances in the parish office.

DECLAN'S WELL TEAM

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Find us on Instagram [@stdeclansparish](https://www.instagram.com/stdeclansparish) and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/stdeclansparish

Website: www.stdeclansparish.org



We want to make sure that people are still connected in our parish while we cannot all meet together at Mass.



CONTINUING CONNECTIONS

The Eucharist is the highpoint of our faith because it is the moment that we fully enter into the new covenant established by Jesus in his death and resurrection. Jesus's love for us on the Cross is made tangible – literally – as we receive Him in Holy Communion. In brief, this is why Catholics place such an emphasis upon the Mass. It's also why, in 'normal' (read non-COVID) times, we have traditionally understood our participation at Sunday Eucharist to be an obligation something that we need to do each week in order to be united to Christ as part of His Church.

But these are not normal times. One of the hardest things right now is that we are still not all able to attend Mass each week. It means that the most important connection point we have as a parish – being together each Sunday for Eucharist – is not available to us as we are used to, or as we would like. I guess we could spend a long time lamenting this, but another option is for us to find the possibility that this presents. What does this moment offer us that we might not have otherwise found?

We cannot all meet for Mass, but we can meet together in smaller numbers. That's why we are going to have a

'Connect Series' for five weeks beginning in late October. This is an opportunity for us to gather in groups to reflect upon 'What Matters Most' as we come to the end of 2020. We want it to be an opportunity for us to discover and reflect upon the places, moments, and experiences where God has been at work in this difficult year. We will reflect upon the Sunday readings and the homily in a small group setting.

Most importantly, we want to do this together. We want to make sure that people are still connected in our parish while we cannot all meet together at Mass. You can start a Connect Series small group with as few as two other friends, and you can meet in person or online. I want to strongly encourage you to attend the Connect Series – because we are not supposed to follow Jesus alone; it's essential, and at this time more than ever, that we walk the journey of faith together.

With love and prayers for you all,

Connect Series 2020

You are invited - this is for you!



St Declan's is running its first Connect Series.

In this five-week series, we explore together how God's Word can help you make the most of 2020.

How will it work?

- Register to receive information and a Zoom link for your mid-week meeting.
- Embark on the five-week series, starting Sunday 25th October, based on Fr Chris's Sunday homily.
- Meet your small group online, Thursdays at 8 pm, connect with others and dive deeper into the content.

Can't join us online?

You can form your own small group and we will give you the resources to run it yourself!

Register now on our parish website <https://www.stdeclansparish.org/connect-series>



Celebrating Love, Simplicity and Generosity

We look back and celebrate what the Josephite Associates brought to St Declan's parish over 16 years.

By Mel Dooner

It was in 2004 that the St Declan's Josephite Associates formed under Mary Gallagher's leadership and the guidance of the Sisters of St Joseph. Friendship, prayer and service became the hallmarks of their monthly meetings and they followed a simple format of personal sharing, prayer, scripture, and fellowship over morning tea. This pattern became embedded in the lives of all who were a part of the Josephite Associates from its inception until the group officially closed in March this year.

Selma Coutinho remembers her time in the Josephite Associates with great fondness.

"For me personally," Selma said, "the group provided a deep insight into Josephite spirituality and an opportunity to bond with like-minded parishioners. I will always cherish my sharing sessions with Mary and Eddie Gallagher and the group which moulded my spirituality from 2004 to 2010."

Directed by the charism of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, the Association's aim was for each member to reflect on where in their own lives they were, using their gifts in a spirit of love, simplicity, homeliness and generosity in building up the life and mission of the church.



Mary King also appreciated the thought and care that Mary Gallagher put into the gatherings.

"From the religious icons in the room, to the music, to the banter, to her professional management when we strayed off topic, and even to the goodies baking in the oven," Mary said. "Personally

speaking, Eddie's ritual of praying over us was bliss, and it made me feel utterly peaceful and blessed by God."

It is with great sadness that we received news of the closing of the St Declan's Josephite Associates group, but our parish is incredibly grateful for the years of dedicated prayer, love and service of the many Associates at St Declan's.

We particularly thank Mary Gallagher for her dedicated service to this ministry and for her passion for forming and leading this wonderful group of parishioners for the past 16 years.

Thank you Mary!

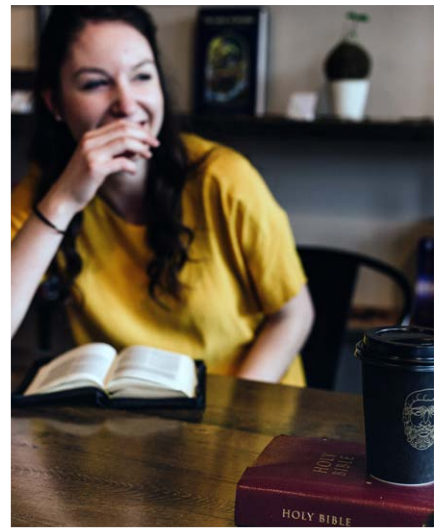
WHAT ARE JOSEPHITE ASSOCIATES?

The Josephite Associates are men and women from all walks of life who are drawn to the spirit of St Mary MacKillop and Julian Tennison Woods. Associates commit themselves to living out St Mary MacKillop's charism in their own way and help make a difference in their local community. Josephite Associates live in all parts of Australia and are also overseas. **For further information about the Josephite Associate's work and mission in Australia and overseas, visit the Sisters of St Joseph [website](#).**

NEW

Stories at the WELL

Our
community
meeting
spot, sharing
how God is
moving in
our lives!



Like all of the blessed meetings and stories that occurred at wells throughout the Bible, in this new column we share our stories of encounters with God, to give thanks and encourage each other.



"I had always struggled with the Parable of the Rich Man, where Jesus says that it would be easier for a camel to enter through

the eye of the needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. I thought the parable unfair. Until one day a stranger asked me for a lift home. I was unable to give the man a lift home because I was due for a business meeting and taking the man home would have certainly caused me to run late for that meeting and lose the opportunity. Instead, I offered him money to catch a cab home but he declined.

He instead insisted I take him home. I again refused. The next day in church the Gospel reading of the day was about the rich man and the eye of the needle.

I realised then that I was the rich man. And that my attachment to my business affairs made it easier for the camel to enter through the eye of the needle than it was for me to give that man a lift home. The parable became clear to me. I had to change my priorities. Christ had to be my priority.

These days when I am confronted with a choice between being a disciple of Jesus and being worried about losing out on something, I remind myself of the Gospel passage, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." - Matt. 6:33.

- John R.

"I drive a manual car and I am familiar with the car's urge to go up a gear, especially when on the open road. Towards the end of last year, I felt that sensation in myself. I was cruising along quite okay.

I was happy enough with where I was spiritually, yet I felt the urge to go from fourth to fifth gear. The niggling would not ease, so I decided to do a (homestyle) retreat to address it. That was the right move. Since then, something shifted. My prayer life and spiritual and theological reading is more regular and intentional and I am more peaceful and content.

I hope that has had benefits for those I encounter. I'm sure lockdown and live streaming have helped too - (like a forced retreat) ...or maybe it's the other way round and the shift helped me through the lockdown!"

- Kate



**SHARE YOUR OWN STORY
WITH US AT THIS LINK!**

A new look for our Youth Group

Madelyn leads the charge in creating a fresh image for our youth

By Jacky Krsnik

The parish youth group has always been an energetic and faithfully committed group of young people, and now their new logo represents their unique and important identity. While resembling the parish logo in its symbols, the colours reflect the vitality of this group of young people.

The green in the logo highlights the vision the youth group has of being a place of growth, both in faith and love of Jesus. The blue symbolises the fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the water of life, strengthening the group through



their fellowship and connection with each other and the wider parish community.

Like the parish logo that was

inaugurated at the end of 2019, the youth logo takes its inspiration from the statue of the risen Jesus above our church altar. And we are again reminded that our parish continues to grow as a community of communities, centred on the love of Jesus, and that our mission is to bring the love of God to life in each of us, together, and for others!

The new logo is visible on the youth social media accounts. Are you following? To keep in the know with St Declan's Youth follow them on Instagram, Facebook and the Youth page of the parish website!

DEACON CAMERON

On his way!

Thank you and God's Blessings,
Deacon Cameron

Deacon Cameron has become a significant part of St Declan's since his arrival just before Christmas last year. His time here has been such a wonderful blessing. It has been a privilege to have him share his gifts with us during this last stage of his journey to priesthood. We wish him well for his upcoming ordination in December and future ministry.

Please pray for Deacon Cameron as he embarks on this next stage of his vocation to priesthood. Please also pray for all Vocations!

Photo: Deacon Cam on his way to be ordained to the Missionaries of God's Love in December.



& Meet greet

This month we meet two parishioners of St Declan's and find out what they love about our parish and what they love to do in their own time.



Darren McDowell

DARREN McDOWELL

Darren has been a parishioner for over 10 years and he has played music at Masses. Since the MGLs arrived he has attended more regularly and has contributed to parish life in so many ways.

What do you think is the best thing about this parish?

The best thing about parish life is the mission-focused community we're developing. Everyone seems on fire for both faith and the desire to connect, grow, serve and share their faith with others, the vibrancy of the place is awesome. It is truly inspiring and constantly energises my own faith journey.

What ministries are you involved in? Which is your favourite and why?

I'm involved with a variety of ministries - a pastoral council member, a guitarist at the 6pm Sunday night Mass, one of the life group leaders, a photographer for parish events and a Eucharistic minister. I can't really pick a favourite - it would be kind of like a parent trying to pick their favourite child. I enjoy them all for different reasons - vision focus, creativity and expression, connection, relationship building and guiding faith journeys, serving in the liturgy. They all have a special place because they all draw something different from me and express something different about who I am and the ways in which I feel God is calling me into His life and mission within the parish.

You work in Mission & Evangelisation in the Diocese of Wollongong. What do you love most about what you do?

Essentially my work for the Diocese of Wollongong consists of supporting parishes to undertake and implement the kind of things such as Alpha, Life Groups, intentional discipleship and leadership formation; activities we're doing here at St Declan's. I love many things about this work, but in essence it's the joy, privilege and experience of being part of the process where lives and parishes are renewed and transformed by deep, personal encounters with Jesus. Journeying with people who are coming to faith or a deeper knowledge and understanding of faith, leading to rejuvenation and transformation through the Holy Spirit, discovering life, energy, hope, joy and resilience is amazing. It's seeing parishes come alive with new vitality and energy for mission and faith.



Renee Ross

What do you like doing in your down time?

Landscape and Nature Photography would be my biggest passion and something I try to get out and do for relaxation. It's wonderful being out in nature, capturing its beauty and exploring new places through travel. Photography enables me to be creative, express my feelings about a place and hopefully provide people with a sense of connection to that place or scene. Even so, I enjoy having a purpose for my down time activities so I created a website to showcase my work (www.lightwavetravelphotography.com). Travel is a big part of this passion and I'm missing the ability to do that with all this Covid-19 pandemic. Another major hobby is theatre and I've been with the Guild Theatre at Rockdale (www.guildtheatre.com.au) for the past 10 years doing both onstage and backstage roles. Also love doing some gardening and cooking too!

RENEE ROSS

Renee is a St Declan's Youth Group leader. This is her second year being involved in this ministry, which she loves.

What do you love about Youth Ministry?

I love that I can meet and get to know so many young people - who are all very unique in their own way. Every youth group is so much fun - especially with all the crazy games that we play. Above all, though, I love that in the Youth Ministry I'm given the opportunity to help each person build a relationship with God, and to grow in their faith.

What has been one of the funniest moments at one of the Youth nights/events?

It's so hard to choose! But I think one of the funniest moments I can think of happened on a social night. There were different challenges that people had to complete, and one included throwing and catching an uncooked egg between two people, and gradually moving further and further apart. The last group left in had done well to not drop their egg. They had one single throw left, when one of the people involved threw the egg too far upwards - and it broke on the ceiling.

What would you say to a young person considering joining a youth group?

Deciding to come to the youth group was one of the best decisions I've made. Over the past couple of years I've been able to meet so many amazing people who I've become really great friends with. It's just so much fun, and it really helps you to get to know God more. I'd really recommend coming along and joining, to any young person!

What has been one of your favourite ways to connect with others during Covid?

When there were more restrictions due to Covid, my favorite way to connect with people was to give them a call or Facetime. As the restrictions have eased a bit more I've enjoyed going for walks with people to the river near my home. I've also enjoyed being able to catch up with a few people at cafes.

What is the first thing you will do once all restrictions are lifted?

Once all restrictions are lifted I will catch up with as many of my friends as I can - and give them all big hugs!



Francilia enjoying the sights of Canberra and her new home

Missing you already...

By Mel Dooner

It is with great fondness and sadness that we say goodbye and many blessings to **Francilia Gomes**. Francilia has recently moved to Canberra as she started a new job there and by all reports she has started well.

Francilia was most recently a Life Group Leader and the Liturgy Team Leader. She has been involved in hosting Alpha groups and was active in the parish

Youth Group when she was younger. Francilia would be known by many parishioners as a Reader and Commentator and through the many other ways she selflessly served our parish.

Francilia, you will be greatly missed but we look forward to saying hello and catching up when you come back for visits.

Many prayers and blessings for your new adventure.



LIVE STREAM MASS

Sundays 9am

Join us on the app, website or
on our YouTube channel



New tech thanks to a new grant

The NSW Premier has provided us with a grant to enhance our live-streamed Masses, which are important to so many parishioners during Covid

By Lara Carlucci

COVID-19 has sparked many changes to our daily lifestyle. Lockdowns can happen any time and social distancing rules have become an everyday standard, so St Declan's Masses now embody many of these unfamiliarities.

For over six months, the parish has experienced live-streamed Masses, with a quick roll-out involving proper equipment and expertise to pull this off. Nik and Mark, our AV team, have seamlessly accomplished the closest thing to an in-person Mass one can experience, and for this, the St Declan's community is grateful.

St Declan's parish recently accepted a grant from the NSW Premier to enhance the technological capability of the Church, making it simpler to live stream the Masses. The new upgraded technology means that online streaming is available for the long-term.

Fr Chris was resistant to streaming Mass digitally initially, believing that people needed to come to Church, until there was no choice but to temporarily stop in-person Masses. However, the success of the live stream opened up a permanent alternative to in-person Mass. Fr Chris sees this as an



Nik and Mark, our AV team.

"It just really hit home how some people, under normal circumstances, can't always make it to Mass, but are still very much part of our parish"

opportunity to connect to people who mightn't be able to attend Mass under normal circumstances (particularly those in local nursing homes), and



Some people can't get to Mass, particularly those in local nursing homes

people who may desire to attend Mass but are reluctant to.

"We got some beautiful photos of people in our nursing homes watching the Mass," Fr Chris said.

"And so it just really hit home how these people, under normal circumstances, can't always make it to Mass, but are still very much part of our parish."

In one voice!

On 4 September St Declan's held its first online Praise and Worship night, which was a huge success

By Jacky Krsnik

With Deacon Cameron on guitar and Mirella Cassis on the keys, inspiring songs rang out across the live stream and into the lounge rooms of all those who tuned in from home. It was an hour of joyous thanksgiving.

During the evening, Cathy Kennedy spoke deeply into the heart of our current challenges and about the power of praise in all circumstances. She then led us in prayer and shared words of scripture. The inspiration to host a night like this came from a desire to sing out together as a parish, even though we may be physically apart. Since singing in church has become restricted due to Covid-19, nights like this provide the opportunity for the community to raise our voices together in praise of our great God.

Reflections from the night:

Deacon Cam - "It seems to me that this was a real moment for our parish. So many people at St Declan's are being drawn deeper into relationship with God and are hungry to know him more and are ripe to go deeper into praise. What a privilege to be able to step into what God is doing to transform our parish and our parishioners at this time!"

Cathy Kennedy - "What joy and fruitfulness we can experience when we use the gifts God has given us for his purposes!"

Thanks so much to all those who made this evening possible.

Our next Praise and Worship Night is coming soon, so keep an eye on Declan's Weekly and social media for more info!



Cathy Kennedy spoke deeply from the heart, led us in prayer and shared words of scripture.





Keeping our vulnerable people safe in our parish is essential. We find out more about the Safeguarding Initiative in our parish.



THANK YOU TO THE 2020 SAFEGUARDING TEAM. From left: Steve Maiolo, Natalie Maiolo, Grace Hong and Adrienne Teychenné.

Keeping St Declan's safe for all

The MGL priests have implemented all recommendations from Catholic Professional Standards to keep people in their care safe.

By Mel Donner

In May this year the Missionaries of God's Love (MGLs) underwent an audit into the religious institute's safeguarding practices. As St Declan's is under the care of the MGLs, the results of this audit are of particular interest to our parish.

In their article titled *Report reveals young order's passion for safeguarding*, the Catholic Weekly (Aug 30, 2020) stated, "The report released on 19 August found that the Missionaries of God's Love had either implemented or was substantially progressed in the implementation of all 108 (100 per cent) of the indicators relevant to them under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards."

While the St Declan's Safeguarding Team continue their ongoing work of developing and ever-improving our practices and processes around safeguarding, these results echo Fr Chris's commitment to St Declan's being a safe place for all.

Please visit our parish website for more information about Safeguarding at St Declan's.

To view the Catholic Professional Standards Ltd report, please [click here](#).

To read the full Catholic Weekly article, please [click here](#).

THANK YOU

Thanks to Adrienne Teychenne who is stepping down from her role as Parish Safeguarding Support Officer (PSSO) and as leader of the St Declan's parish Safeguarding Team. Since beginning this role in 2017, Adrienne has spent countless hours establishing the Safeguarding practices and protocols set out by the Safeguarding Office at St Declan's. With care and dedication, Adrienne responded to the call to support Fr Chris in ensuring all processes are in place to make St Declan's a safe parish for all.



WELCOME STEVE

We also thank and recognise Steve Maiolo for stepping up to the role as Parish Safeguarding Support Officer (PSSO) at St Declan's and leader of the Safeguarding Team.



Abuse is experienced by many and can occur in a variety of ways. There are many places where you can receive help and support. First, as abuse is a crime, you can contact the police on **000 (in an emergency)** or on **9375 8599 (Hurstville Police)**. Alternatively, you can contact the **Archdiocese of Sydney's Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office** at **(02) 9390 5810** or **safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org**. Father Chris Ryan MGL is also available to assist and support you in any way possible.

Saying sorry is a choice

St Declan's parish children make their First Reconciliation

By Mel Dooner

As with many parish events this year, it was a little touch and go whether we would be able to celebrate the children's Sacraments at all in 2020. Just how we were going to do this became a complex decision that required great creativity and flexibility.

Throughout August and early September, Fr Chris and Chloe Abel, the St Declan's Sacramental Coordinator, assisted the children, their parents and St Declan's Primary School in preparing the children for the sacrament. While the children at St Declan's completed their preparation during their lessons, the children who go to other schools completed their preparation in evening classes in the church.

Chloe Abel said it went really well and that they had a great response from parents.

"We had two themes: 'God loves you no matter what' and 'Saying sorry is a choice'," Chloe said. "We wanted to focus on how much God loves them as some kids can be a bit scared when it comes to this sacrament. The nights involved a lot of discussion with the parents and we looked at the story of Zacchaeus to highlight how God loves each person no matter what they have done."



Chloe said it went really well and that they had a great response from parents.

Chloe was impressed by how full of enthusiasm the children were during the discussions, always willing to share answers and ask lots of questions. "The Principal, Mr Cranney, and the Religious Education Coordinator, Mr Parkin, were so accommodating and the teachers even helped out at the actual sacrament," Chloe said. "It was great to have their support and presence."

A huge thank you to Fr Chris, Chloe Abel, the Sacramental Team and St Declan's Primary School for making First



Reconciliation possible this year in a time of great complexity.

We look forward to seeing the First Holy Communion and Confirmation children receive their sacraments in the next few months.

Please keep these children and their families in your prayers.

PHOTO: Louise Perrau, the St Declan's Family Educator, also ran a Zoom session to make Good Deed Beads with the parents and their kids, top. Ava T with her set of Good Deed Beads, above.

Welcome Chloe Abel!

We introduce our new sacramental coordinator

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Chloe Abel onto the St Declan's staff as the new Sacramental Coordinator. In a year of so much complexity with Covid-19, the children's sacraments were postponed until the end of this year. Now, with Chloe on board, and safety protocols in place, we are seeing the sacraments roll out for our children from September to December. Chloe brings with her much energy, enthusiasm and experience.

Tell us a bit about yourself

I am mum to an adorable 9 month old boy, Ollie, but prior to that I was a high school Religion teacher. I have also been the Youth Coordinator at Our Lady of Fatima



Chloe Abel our new Sacramental Coordinator

Kingsgrove and served one year on the Youth Mission Team in Melbourne.

What appealed to you most about this role as Sacramental Coordinator?

I said yes to this role because growing up in a non-practising Catholic family I only had access to the sacraments through my school education. As I got older and took ownership of my faith, the sacraments became more real, beautiful and important to me. I am excited to be in a role where I can help people grow in relationship with God through the sacraments.

We look forward to supporting and getting to know Chloe as our new Sacramental Coordinator and look forward to witnessing the children receiving their sacraments this year and onwards.

STRENGTHENING PARISH AND SCHOOL TIES

Weekly chats

Our St Declan's Primary School students have been getting to know our priests with a weekly visit to the classroom

By Lara Carlucci

St Declan's Primary students have been receiving weekly visits from some of the MGLs. Every Friday for half an hour, classes receive a talk from either Fr Chris, Fr Adam or Deacon Cameron. The visits involve prayer, discussion and talks with the children about their work and what Jesus means to them.

Mr Parkin, St Declan's Primary Religious Education Coordinator, sees the classroom visits as an exceptionally positive and interactive experience for the students, to learn about their faith and the roles that the MGLs play.

"The kids love it," Mr Parkin said. "They love listening to them, to their story."

The disruptions caused by COVID-19 in Terms One and Two have meant that the visits were officially

"The kids love it," Mr Parkin said. "They love listening to them, to their story."

ongoing from Term Three. The success Mr Parkin has seen in Term Three makes him hopeful that Term Four will run smoothly.

"I think the lessons are really powerful," Mr Parkin said. "The children have become quite used to it and it gives them a name to a face. So when we go back to whole school Masses because they're not existing at the moment, at least they'll know the priest and the order of some of it and they've actually got connections, which is fantastic."

Celebrating our Parish's Saint

By Mel Dooner

On Friday 24 July, St Declan's Primary School invited our parish to join Fr Chris and the school children in celebrating Mass online for St Declan's feast day. While the church itself was largely empty, it was wonderful to know that, in classrooms and homes nearby, people were joining and praying.

At the Mass, a beautiful portrait of St Declan was placed on the sacred space in front of the altar, along with paintings crafted by the children and the new St Declan's Primary School prayer. Fr Chris blessed the prayer and the portrait of our patron St Declan. They now hang proudly in the school's entry foyer.

We look forward as a whole parish to again joyfully celebrate St Declan's Feast Day next year.

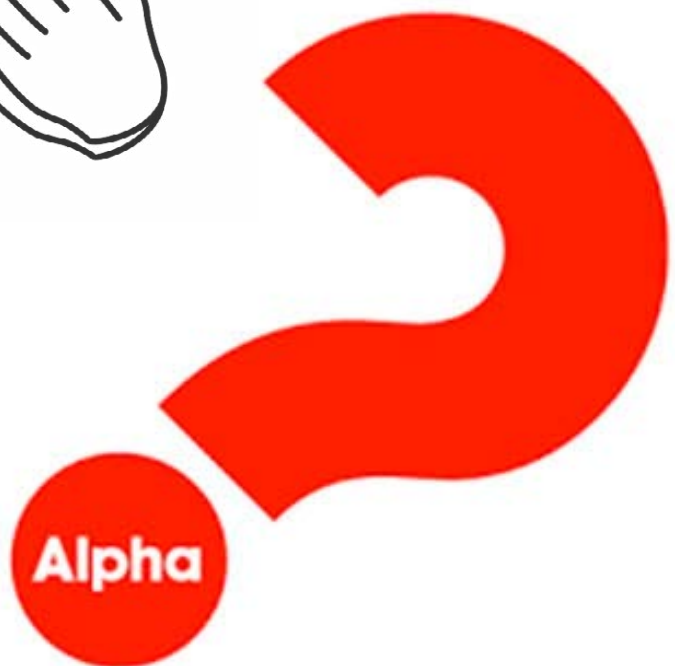


ALPHA

Alpha Update



Thank you to all for your prayers, they have helped Alpha continue strongly even during Covid. We currently have 71 guests and 30 hosts and helpers running 11 groups, both online and in person. This is a great testimony of God's work in our community. We ask that you continue to pray for our guests, that they may have a profound encounter of God's love.



Growing together

Two members of St Declan's Life Groups share their experiences

By Jacky Krsnik

One way in which our community stays connected and grows together is through Life Groups. St Declan's currently has two Life Groups. They meet once a fortnight and are a way to continue in fellowship with others after Alpha.

"I took the opportunity to join a Life Group at the end of the last Alpha course. Where Alpha has re-ignited my journey to discover Christ after a long period of neglect, being a part of a Life Group continues to nourish that flame, filling it with helpful direction on being a disciple as well as providing a welcoming place to share my joys and struggles with others. Also, during this period of isolation and uncertainty, it helps to remind me of the strong spiritual community we have at St Declan's.

I am inspired by the personal stories others have shared and it has motivated me to continue to learn and pray. Despite the current restrictions allowing our large group to only meet via zoom, it is still quite a packed 1.5 hours and leaves me wanting more.

I happily look forward to when we can eventually get together with our families! I would recommend anybody who is looking for more after Alpha, or who have the desire to feel connected and go beyond just attending Mass to join. It will be worth your time." - **Niko, Life Group 1**

"Joining a Life Group has been a very positive and enjoyable experience. Initially I did have hesitation in joining as it was

Life Group 1



Life Group 2

online and I didn't know what to expect from it. Now, several weeks later, I can definitely say that I am happy to be part of a Life Group. I find it enriching to listen to other people's testimonies, their perspectives on life from a Christian's point of view.

"It is a place where I feel at ease and comfortable talking about our love for our God without any

judgement. I now see Life Group as my fortnightly bonding with my brothers and sisters in Christ."

- **Linda, Life Group 2**

If you have completed the Alpha course and are interested in continuing your faith journey through connecting with others in a Life Group, contact Cathy at evangelisation@stdeclansparish.org

To live life to the full

Our Social Justice Group has compiled resources for people who need support for their mental wellbeing

By Mel Dooner

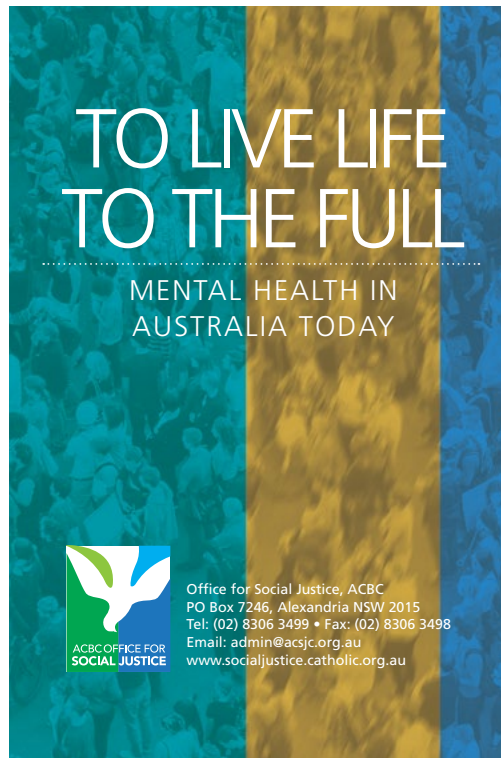
With one in five Australians developing a mental illness at some stage in their lifetime, it is highly likely that we all know a family member, a friend, or even a fellow St Declan's parishioner, who is affected.

The focus of this year's 2020-21 Social Justice Statement, developed by the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, is on mental health in Australia and how we, as the Catholic Church, can be a source of hope, acceptance and support for those who have mental ill-health.

A number of members of the St Declan's Social Justice Group recently attended a mental health Zoom workshop run by the Catholic Social Justice Office in Parramatta Diocese. In the workshop, they had the opportunity to pray, reflect and learn about the content of the Social Justice Statement itself and some of the challenges and resources available for our church, parish and society.

A copy of the Social Justice Statement and other relevant documents can be downloaded [here](#).

The statement itself is timely, with the reported increased rate of mental ill-health in both Australia



and overseas this year in light of the impact of Covid-19. This is over and above the prevalence of mental ill-health across all areas of Australia prior to the pandemic.

The statement provides a number of beautiful examples of both saints and ordinary people who have had or who currently have mental illness. It also calls on all Catholic Australians to join the Australian Bishops in rejecting the stigma of mental ill health so that people with mental illness and their carers experience greater inclusion and a greater quality of life in our church and society.

In order to assist our parish to reach out to those who may have mental ill-health and their carers, Kate Hewett, a member of the Social Justice Group, has provided

a range of additional online resources and websites that may be helpful for someone experiencing mental illness, or someone supporting or caring for someone who is. If you or someone you know needs help with mental illness, please check out the Additional Resources listed on the next page.

Thank you to the Social Justice Group for all the work you do in helping our parish advocate for and reach out to those in need. We look forward to seeing further developments in what will come out of the Social Justice Statement for St Declan's.

~ PRAYER ~

Jesus, you invite us all into the fullness of life. May we support one another to flourish in body, mind and spirit. Strengthen our commitment to ensure that nobody falls through gaps in our systems of care. People called you mad. Help us to recognise you in those who suffer mental ill-health today. Show us how to eliminate stigmatisation of mental ill health from our parishes, schools, communities and organisations. You drew near to those who were suffering in body or mind. May we too feel your nearness when we struggle with mental health challenges. May we be one as members of Your Body. You invite us to share in your ministry of love and true compassion. May we be empowered by your Spirit to reach out to all people in need. May we build communities of welcome and inclusion. Amen



Mental Health Support

GROW

The Grow Group Program can help with support for your mental wellbeing.

Members are people learning skills to help them in their everyday lives. New members are encouraged to come along and see if it's for them. There is no obligation to continue. There are several groups around Sydney:

Jannali: Mon 1.30-3.30 pm
Burwood: (COVID online) Tues 6.30-8.30 pm
Newtown: (COVID online) Wed 1.15-3.15 pm
Lidcombe: (COVID online) Thurs 6.30-8.30 pm
Camperdown: (COVID online) Mon 6.30-8.30 pm
Phone: 1800558268 to enrol
<https://grow.org.au/>

COMPEER

International award-winning program, operated by St Vincent de Paul, with proven results for adults living with diagnosed mental illness. The aim is social inclusion and friendship.

Volunteer opportunities with Compeer - Are you willing to give four hours per month for 12 months for one-to-one friendship with a socially isolated adult living with mental illness? You meet in a public setting, enjoying your planned social event e.g. a coffee, a sports match, a picnic or attending a compeer social event.

To give or receive support phone 6234 7309 or email compeer@svdep-cg.org.au
<https://compeer.org/>

BEYOND BLUE

Provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health.

Phone: 1300 22 4636
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

HEADSPACE

Headspace offers mental health support for those under the age of 25. The program

currently has phone and online services only.

Monday to Friday

Hurstville - Phone: 8048 3350

<https://headspace.org.au/headspace-centres/hurstville/>

LIFELINE

People call Lifeline, run by Wesley Mission, when they are alone, afraid or feel that life is not worth living. They also call when they have relationship- or financial stress. Callers talk about their health problems, unemployment, past traumas or problems with alcohol, drugs or gambling.

Phone: 13 11 14 (24/7 Crisis Support)

Website: **<https://www.wesleymission.org.au/about-us/what-we-do/helping-people-most-in-need/mental-health-and-hospitals/lifeline-sydney-and-sutherland/>**

KIDS HELPLINE

For when kids feel triggered or unsafe. Available for kids aged 5 to 12, teens aged 13 to 17, young adults aged 18 to 25, as well as for parents and carers of children in these age groups.

Phone: 1800 551 800 (anytime, any reason)
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

CATHOLICCARE

Helping Sydney families with relationships, parenting, ageing, disabilities, addictions and mental health concerns, such as depression, loneliness, anxiety, conflict and stress.

Phone: 13 18 19

<https://www.catholiccare.org/>

EDUCATION IN MENTAL HEALTH

The Australian Red Cross runs a Mental Health First Aid course.

Mental Health First Aid Australia – A range of courses on offer [here](#).

Workplace Mental Health - First Aid Training Course - **<https://mhfa.com.au/>**

"Hello, How are you feeling today?"

A new ministry connecting people at St Declan's

By Jacky Krsnik

Good things continue to come out of this pandemic, many of which can be seen here at St Declan's, as people reach out to each other with small acts of kindness and great love.

Initially, to ensure that no person went unnoticed, the Project Agape ministry was established to deliver groceries and medicine to vulnerable and isolated elderly parishioners. But as restrictions continue, a greater need to regularly connect with each other has arisen.

So a new initiative was created – **The TeleCare Ministry**. This initiative aims to reach out to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely. The Telecare volunteers connect with people in our parish via a regular phone call session, people who may otherwise be feeling disconnected from the faith community.

If you or someone you know would like to receive a regular call from one of our parishioners on the Telecare team, please contact Nellie or the parish office. Please also get in touch if you would like to join the Telecare team.



stay connected

TELECARE MINISTRY

Providing support by regularly connecting with our sick, elderly or housebound parishioners.



Do you know someone that may like a friendly call and prayerful support?

For more information contact Nellie Doueihy
e: visitation@stdeclansparish.org p: (02) 9580 1310

**ALPHA
YOUTH**
Series



Do you want to talk about life's big questions?

Try Youth Alpha!

Youth Alpha will be starting on 16 October and is for anyone in grades 9-12! It will run every Friday night of Term 4 from 7.30 -9.00pm.

Register for Youth Alpha [here](#) or contact Maddie for more information at youth@stdeclansparish.org or 0411 707 880

Ways to keep connected

There are many ways you can stay connected with St Declan's Parish, Penshurst. Here are our social media links to keep you up-to-date with all the latest news and events.

St Declan's parish APP

Have you downloaded the app yet?



DOWNLOAD IT HERE!

<https://bit.ly/declansapp> when entering your phone number add +61 and leave off the zero



DECLAN'S WELL E-MAGAZINE

Our quarterly e-magazine celebrates the ways in which God is at work in our community and beyond.

Sign up [here](#)

SOCIAL



Instagram

[@stdeclansparish](https://www.instagram.com/stdeclansparish)



Facebook

[www.fb.com/stdeclansparish](https://www.facebook.com/stdeclansparish)



YouTube: Live-stream

<https://www.youtube.com/c/stdeclansparish>



Website

<https://www.stdeclansparish.org>

Declan's Weekly

Parish bulletin now merged with Declan's Weekly



Our parish bulletin is now combined with our weekly email (Declan's Weekly). Sign up [here](#) to receive the week's events and notices straight to your inbox.

Let Us Pray

Our Intercessions Prayer Team responds to calls for spiritual support for anyone who needs it.

By Mel Dooner

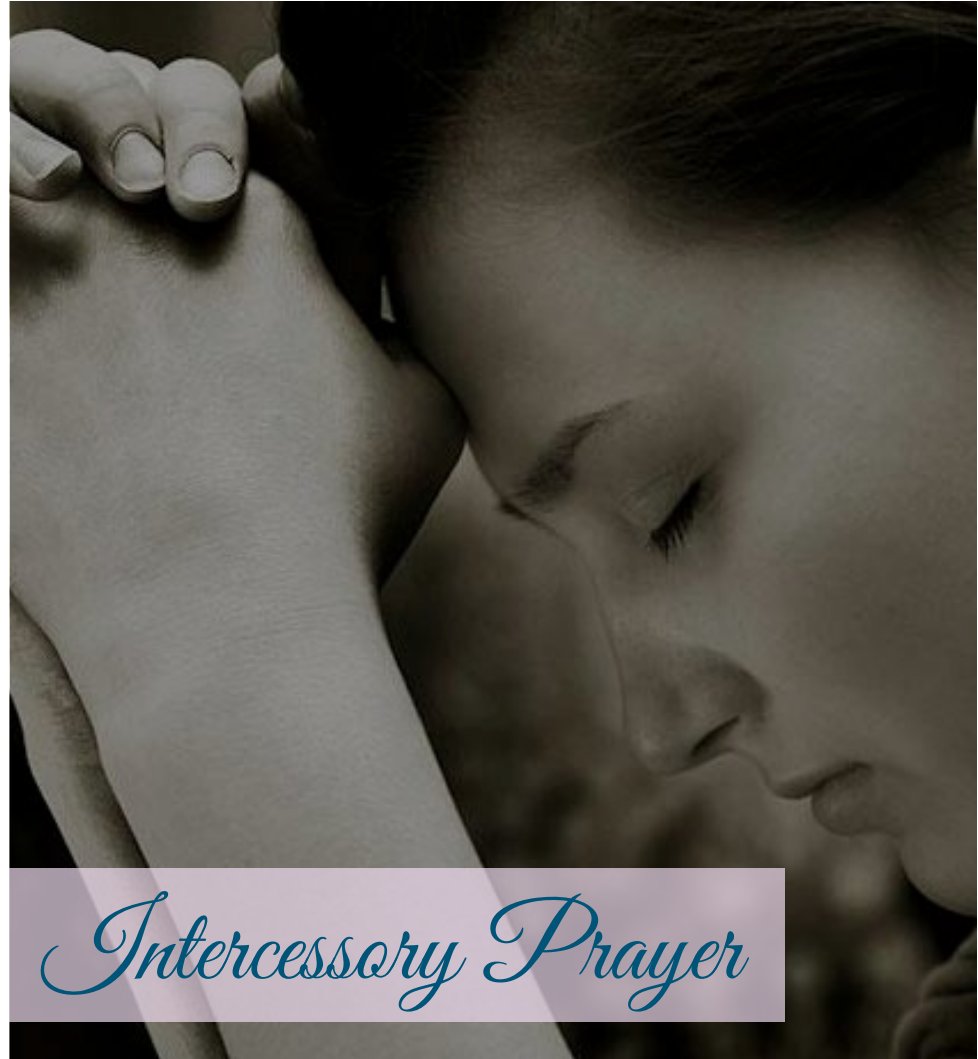
Have you ever prayed for someone else? Or asked someone to pray for you, or someone you love?

It's hard to imagine living life without being able to call on others for emotional, practical and spiritual support at some stage.

One of the beautiful gifts of the Catholic Church is the gift of intercessory prayer. This type of prayer is one way we can lift up those in our parish, in our families, our community and world who have particular needs, who are suffering or who have died, or who need God's healing love and mercy at a particular time. As St Paul said to the early church, "In all your prayer and entreaty keep praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all God's holy people." (Ephesians 6:18)

This newly formed Intercessions Prayer Team faithfully responds to the calls for prayer that come through on the Intercessions Prayer form on the website and app.

Monica Hayes leads the ministry and believes that it's a great personal



Intercessory Prayer

blessing to be involved. When Monica responds to the requests for prayer, she feels the Holy Spirit is at work and is helping her to evolve and grow the ministry. As the requests for prayer come in, Monica reads them and presents them to the team with a reflection. Monica assures us that there is no "one way" to request a prayer and that

she maintains privacy and confidentiality.

"We occasionally get feedback on a prayer request, for instance an improvement in a person's health," Monica said. "We just hold up our prayers and trust in God's providence and love in answering them."

If you know of anyone who needs prayer at any time, we encourage you

to join our long Catholic tradition of holding up those most in need of our prayers by contacting the St Declan's Intercession Prayer team [here](#).

If you would like to respond to the call to help those most in need through prayerful support, please contact Cathy at evangelisation@stdeclansparish.org to join the team.

A new team for our parish

Meet the members of our new-look Parish Pastoral Council,
a significant development for our parish



Fr Chris Ryan
Senior Leadership



Fr Adam Crouch
Senior Leadership



Cathy Kennedy
Senior Leadership



Mel Dooner
Senior Leadership



Frank Alvarez
Parishioner



Cathy Coman
Parishioner



Monica Hayes
Parishioner



Jacky Krsnik
Parishioner



Darren McDowell
Parishioner



Peter Cranney
ex-officio - School Principal



Mary Perera
ex-officio- Finance

By Jacky Krsnik

Earlier this year, on March 14, the new St Declan's Pastoral Council met for the first time. The new look Pastoral Council is a group of parishioners and staff who provide feedback and a broader perspective on the needs and possible initiatives for the future direction of the parish.

The purpose of the Pastoral Council is to support Fr Chris in developing strategies to implement the mission and vision of the parish. It also provides an important avenue for feedback from all parishioners. The council is made up of the

Senior Leadership Team (Fr Chris, Fr Adam, Cathy Kennedy, and Mel Dooner), a team of parishioners (Frank Alvarez, Cathy Coman, Monica Hayes, Jacky Krsnik and Darren McDowell) and two ex-officio members (school principal Peter Cranney and finance committee member Mary Perera).

We ask that you keep the Pastoral Council's work in your prayers as they do their best to discern and faithfully guide our community in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and God's will.

And we look forward to keeping you updated on the work of the Pastoral Council as things progress.



The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Westmead works with over 4,000 people in vulnerable situations, including refugees, migrants and those seeking asylum. The demand for their services has grown by more than 220% since March 2020. JRS are now providing emergency food aid for more than 800 people, including 300 children, per week. Please consider donating some items from this list of non-perishable food and toiletries.

Food items:

- Basmati Rice
- Cooking Oil
- Long life milk
- Tinned tuna, red kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas and fruit
- Biscuits and muesli bars
- Oats and cereal

Toiletries:

- Nappies (large sizes)
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes
- Shampoo
- Sanitary pads and napkins
- Razors and shaving foam
- Deodorant (male & female)
- Soap

The JRS Foodbank Drive will take place across three weekends: **Saturday October 10, 17 and 24** between **9am and 11am**.

Please leave your donation outside the Parish Meeting Room (access via the school carpark).

CAN YOU HELP?

JRS October Foodbank drive



**Come spend
an hour with
Jesus in quiet
contemplative
prayer**

**Thursdays
9.45am & 7.00pm
(no pre-booking required)**



ADORATION