



Pastoral Ministry CONNECT

VOL. 2 | MARCH 2022

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we minister and all who have contributed to our story.

OVERVIEW:

- Meet John France
- A different way of doing parish leadership
- Liturgy on the Margins
- Oceania Pastoral Ministry Webinar | 15th March
- More about Alive in the Spirit

Welcome to the Pastoral Ministry Network - your network that accompanies you, sharing fresh homegrown resources and exploring together new ways of living and growing our faith in Jesus Christ.

Contact Us

info@pastoralministrynetwork.org

www.pastoralministrynetwork.org

Let's have a yarn ...

One of the highlights of 2021 was the opportunity to connect online and network through the monthly "Let's have a Yarn". The Pastoral Ministry Network is excited to announce that Let's Have a Yarn is back!

Mark your diary for the first gathering for the year for Pastoral Ministry Network members.

**Tuesday 29th March
7.30pm (AEDT)**

Members will receive an invitation with a registration link in coming weeks. Invite others to become members of the Pastoral Ministry Network and to connect with others in Pastoral Ministry from Oceania and share the joys and challenges of mission.



A Word from our Co-Chair

Hi everyone and welcome to the March edition of CONNECT- the monthly newsletter of the Pastoral Ministry Network (PMN).

I am presently the Administrator of Mary Help of Christians Parish Sawtell NSW. We are a small parish in the Diocese of Lismore with Coffs Harbour to the north and Bellingen to the south.

I became interested in the PMN when seeking connections with the wider church. Although I really enjoy living and ministering in regional NSW, a downside can be that we miss out on events, retreats, conferences, speakers, and other opportunities held in the larger centres. I have found the PMN a wonderful means to tap into a vast selection of resources that hitherto we had little or no access. The Alive in the Spirit 2021 Conference, for example, enabled interested parishioners to experience talks from international and local presenters alike.

From that initial interest last year, I now somehow find myself Co-chair with Richard. Yes, another surprise from the Holy Spirit! A position I was happy to take on because of the value and potential I see in the PMN.

I thank you for taking the time to read this March edition of Connect. My hope and prayer is that it helps bring us all closer to the Lord and to each other.

God Bless

Fr Mick and Zippy (The Whippet)



Fr Mick Alcock & Zippy

JOIN THE TEAM

Volunteer positions available for people who are passionate about pastoral ministry



Marketing Team

If you have marketing experience and a passion for pastoral ministry, consider becoming a member of the PMN Marketing group. This group meets approximately six times per year to monitor marketing plans and ensure the Pastoral Ministry Network reaches as many hearts and hands as we can.



Forum Moderators

One of the features of PMN Membership is participation in the many forums via our Insights tab. If you enjoy connecting with others in conversation, then this role is for you. PMN is inviting you to be a forum moderator, contributing to and monitoring forums ensuring all posts are aligned with the forum guidelines.



Share the Spirit!

With the Alive in the Spirit Conference fast approaching, we would love as many people to hear about the Conference as possible. If you have some time to assist the working committee to make phone calls and assist in general promotion then please contact us to help share the spirit!

Email info@pastoralministrynetwork.org to express your interest for any of the above positions. It would be great to have you involved.

MEET THE PMN COMMITTEE

Each month we will introduce a member of the Committee and share some of their story.

JOHN FRANCE



John, please share what areas of Pastoral Ministry you are engaged in?

I am a Parish Leader at the Morisset Parish, which is part of the Maitland/Newcastle Diocese. I was appointed to this role by the late Bishop William Wright. This appointment by Bishop Bill was supported by Canon 517.2 which states that in the absence of a pastor due to a lack of priests, canon 517, §2 allows the possibility for deacons or women and men who are not ordained to be entrusted with the pastoral care of a parish by the diocesan bishop.

Why are you passionate about Pastoral Ministry?

The indispensable role of all the baptised in the Church's mission was one of the fundamental themes of Vatican II and it has been consistently emphasised in Church documents since the Council. My role gives me the opportunity to affirm the right and duty of all the faithful to 'share in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ each in their own way.'

What's your idea of a perfect day?

My idea of a perfect day is when all is running smoothly in the parish, and I can just 'chill out' with my wife.

Morisset Parish, NSW: A different way of doing parish leadership

reproduced with permission from the National Centre for Evangelisation. View original article at <https://nce.catholic.org.au/the-bridge/the-bridge/morisset-parish-nsw-a-different-way-of-doing-parish-leadership>

The town of Morisset is located on beautiful Lake Macquarie and is part of the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. In the 1880s, St Mary MacKillop founded a convent and a school, and the legacy of her work is still present in a thriving parish primary school.

Morisset's proximity to the Sydney-Newcastle Freeway, as well as escalating home prices in Sydney, have led to a growth in population as more families choose to live in the area, commuting to work or even working from home.

The Catholic parish of St John Vianney, Morisset, is led by a lay leadership team operating with the guidance of a priest supervisor and the support of a sacramental priest. Morisset parish does not have a parish priest, yet it functions as a canonical parish.

You may well ask what this means and how it works, as did the National Centre for Evangelisation when it interviewed John and Uta France, members of the lay leadership team, and Fr Geoff Mulhearn, the priest supervisor, or moderator as the role is sometimes called.

About 10 years ago, Morisset parish was forced to consider alternative ways of operating due to a priest shortage. Referencing Canon 517 §2 from the Code of Canon Law, it was proposed that parish leadership would be entrusted to a team of lay people, who would work with a priest who was principally available for sacramental purposes and would provide guidance to the leadership team, as required.

A priest of 60 years, Fr Geoff has been in the role of priest supervisor since the initiative commenced. He holds the same responsibility for Toronto, a neighbouring parish which is led by a lay man.

"This model is not a second-best option," Fr Geoff says. "In Morisset and Toronto the model has worked very well with the leadership in both parishes being excellent."

However, he notes that while he continually desists from being called the “parish priest”, many people, including other priests and diocesan staff, have difficulties understanding and working with the model. This confusion or lack of understanding is possibly reasonable given Catholics are familiar with a parish being led by a priest, and not by one, or more, lay people. Having first-hand experience of the model, Fr Geoff believes it not only to be “viable and powerful”, but one that he hopes other bishops and priests will consider.

John and Uta have also found the model to be very effective. Uta suggests the model works because “we spread the workload”.

“While it’s collaborative, we know the buck stops with us,” she adds. “It has more possibilities than just a stop-gap due to a shortage of priests. I think it could lift the burden for parish priests.”

When the parish first committed to operate with this model, a team of seven people formed the leadership team. The team was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the parish, for example, work, health and safety matters, professional standards, employment of staff and the maintenance of parish facilities. Each member also took responsibility for foundational areas of parish life: identity and community, prayer and worship, formation, mission and outreach, leadership and structure. The team worked closely with the parish secretary and the parish pastoral council.

John highlights that their team, like many parishes in their diocese, has also had to work within the tensions and stresses of the repercussions of the sexual abuse crisis. To this end, as parish leaders they are required to receive regular professional supervision.

There has also been a strong commitment to “being available”. John says they didn’t want to be like other parishes where an answering machine took most of the calls. Rather, they share the responsibility for answering calls, day and night, and are always ready to be the first point of contact for people in distress or for the more practical matters of running a parish.

However, the last couple of years have seen some challenges for the parish. Firstly, for a variety of reasons, the leadership team is currently much smaller with only John and Uta at the helm. This is not an ideal situation, but due to COVID-19 the parish has been unable to have their annual Pentecost Sunday gatherings for the past two years, where they would come together to plan, pray and ensure their model remained effective and sustainable. Hopefully, 2022 will see a return to this event as well as a renewal, and increase in members, of the leadership team.

Secondly, COVID-19 restrictions have meant almost two years without “in-person” Mass attendance. Before the pandemic, about 200 people would regularly attend Sunday Mass. Now, with limited numbers allowed in their church, only 40 people can attend. To provide for those who couldn’t attend Mass, the team evaluated that a “Zoom Mass” provided greater interaction between participants, rather than a livestream version. The parish has also worked hard at outreach during this time. For example, parishioners who weren’t tech-savvy had a hard-copy of the bulletin delivered to their home each week, keeping them connected to the parish.

Finally, with limited ability to attend formation or training, the parish embraced the online offerings from the Alive in the Spirit conference. With Uta’s encouragement, parish members were able to explore different initiatives, as well as being encouraged and revitalised in their respective ministries. Such formation provided many of the tools required to achieve their future goal of greater outreach to the families and young people in the parish.

Given that, in Morisset, team members are not paid for their ministry work, one wonders how long this model can be sustained. Fr Geoff also believes some sort of financial remuneration must be considered in the future to ensure sustainability. For now, though, John and Uta aren’t looking for financial rewards. Unable to have a family, they are devoted to their ministry and call St John Vianney parishioners their family.



[Watch the interview with the Morisset team here](#)

John, Uta and Fr Geoff are a little uncertain as to what the future holds. They are all mourning the death of Bishop Bill Wright who gave the parish the opportunity to trial this model of leadership. And while he wasn’t always 100 per cent sure the model would be a success, Bishop Bill offered encouragement without interference. The team, together with Fr John Purnell, the new sacramental priest, looks forward to sharing with a new bishop the fruits and possibilities that their parish leadership model has provided.

In closing, John suggests we need to think deeply about how we work as a parish because, ultimately, we need to remember we are here for Christ’s mission.

“Do we really want to continue the way we have been going?” he asks. “It’s not been working in terms of what the Church is called to be. We need to be more engaged and less exclusive. The Spirit works in the hearts of all people, and if we give people the freedom to be involved, there could be some great initiatives.”

Liturgy on the Margins

Australian Diaconal Ministry, Present and Future

In October 2021, Elizabeth Young RSM started a blog called Liturgy on the Margins, which is a site of conversation around diaconal ministry in the Australian Catholic Church. This conversation has two main aims:

PRESENT: To recognise, celebrate and promote diaconal ministry in Australia, especially as it is experienced through liturgy in marginal spaces and communities.

FUTURE: To identify people and situations that yearn for such ministry, and potential leaders to carry out this ministry through formal Church endorsement.

Along with the blog, a group has formed called Australian Catholics Exploring the Diaconate. It is responding to several proposals from session one of the Plenary Council to discern about women deacons. Please get in contact if you would like to learn more, be involved, or share your story <https://liturgyonthemargins.org/>



To share your work with other Pastoral Ministry Network members, as Elizabeth has, contact Lisa at info@pastoralministrynetwork.org



If you are in an organisation or know of an organisation who would like to advertise in our monthly Pastoral Ministry Connect newsletter, please contact Lisa at info@pastoralministrynetwork.org for pricing and terms. Your support enables the Pastoral Ministry Network to carry out its mission within the Church.



OCEANIA PASTORAL MINISTRY WEBINAR

Jump Starting our Communities

with Brendon Mannyx, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

- Are you feeling stifled, or down after 2021? How do we grow from the past and jump start our ministries into the new year?
- Hear some practical examples of what communities have been doing and plan to do for a mission focused 2022!

**Open to everyone
who seeks to live
God's mission.**

\$20 Non-Members | Members Free

Tuesday, 15th March 2022, 11am – 12.30pm (AEDT)

Register at <https://pastoralministrynetwork.org/events/>

You will receive a confirmation email upon registration and further information closer to the event.



Mission Planners
Network of Oceania



Grief Care



Oceania Pastoral Ministry Webinar with Keynote Presenter **Brendon Mannyx**

**Manager
Mission and Outreach
Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle**

Brendon is the Mission and Outreach Manager for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. He is married to Claire and they are blessed with six children. Brendon holds degrees in Creative Arts (Theatre), Law and a Master of Arts (Theology and Christian Ministry). He is passionate about working with communities to reimagine missionary discipleship in today's world.

Brendon will talk of his experience of jump starting our communities and share an exciting initiative that the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle are embarking on for a mission focussed 2022!

Register at
<https://pastoralministrynetwork.org/events/>
If you are a PMN member, please log into PMN and go to the Events Page to receive your discount code for the webinar. Please enter this code at the checkout so you don't have to enter any credit card details. Event Login information will be sent the day before the webinar.

Alive in the Spirit

Being The Community Christ Calls Us To Be

Mark Your Diaries: May 26th - 28th

Planning for the Alive in the Spirit Conference is well underway. Mark your diaries for 26th - 28th May where we will gather online to hear from amazing keynote speakers including Maeve Louise Heaney and Luke Tobin, engage in networking across the region and access a number of workshops from people working in many areas in Pastoral Ministry.

The scriptural theme for this year is from Micah,

"God has shown all you people what is good. And what does God require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

Would you like to prepare a prayer reflection on the scriptural theme? You might want to draw a piece of art, or record a reflection for consideration.

Email info@aliveinthespirit.com.au to let the team know what you or your community would like to do and we can send you specifications.

Registrations open March 28th for individual and group registrations. See below for expressions of interest for workshop presenters and if you know an organisation who would like to sponsor the Conference.

Together, we remain Alive in the Spirit!

Third keynote speaker announcement via www.aliveinthespirit.com.au



Keynote Speakers:

Dr Maeve Louise Heaney
*Director of the Xavier
Centre for Theological
Formation*

Luke Tobin
*Mission Formation
Educator
Catholic Mission*



Workshops & Sponsors:

Visit
www.aliveinthespirit.com.au
to express your interest in
being a workshop presenter
or becoming a sponsor for
the Alive in the Spirit
Conference.

Start a conversation via the PMN Online Forum

The Pastoral Ministry Network is your network. The online forum has been created as a space where members can share ideas and questions, to enrich our network.

Contribute to the topics already started or begin your own discussion thread on an area of pastoral life not discussed elsewhere.

Be sure to introduce yourself in the "introduce yourself" thread, and read the forum guidelines to ensure a safe and welcoming experience for all.

As well as the online forum, visit the [insights](#) page where you will find a plethora of video and book resources to use within your communities or for your own journey.

www.pastoralministrynetwork.org

To submit or suggest an article for Pastoral Ministry Connect or to share a story of your community, please contact us via the details below. We're always looking for good news stories to share from those working in pastoral ministry.

The collective wisdom of people working in the area is what makes the Pastoral Ministry Network a great place to network and support each other.

[PMN Executive](#)

Co-chair: Fr Michael Alcock

Co-chair: Richard McMahon

Secretary: Carmel Fenton

Treasurer: Carole Gan

Executive Officer: Lisa Bright

[Contact Us](#)

info@pastoralministrynetwork.org

www.pastoralministrynetwork.org

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One login

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CORPORATE

AU \$1000

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15 logins

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[Join Us](#) to become a member.