



ACGWT: The Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn Women's Taskforce

Annual Report 2021

During 2021 the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Women's Taskforce successfully adapted to the challenges of the pandemic and completed most of the proposed events and tasks.

A breakfast celebration for *International Women's Day* was held at St Vincent's Parish Centre in March. The guest speaker was Madeleine Banister who spoke about her own experience of working with the Catholic Women's League and attending United Nations meetings on women's issues in New York, 2019 and 2020.

In March the Taskforce met for a reflection morning facilitated by Sr Clare Condon. The theme was *God is in the Newness* and the focus scripture passage was the raising of Lazarus, Jn 11:1-45. During the afternoon the group participated in the national consultation with Catholic women organized by the *Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry*.

Consultations with women took place in Goulburn in February, Young in April, and Yass in June. These occasions were, in general, well supported and gave the taskforce insight into the experience and concerns of those women. Many expressed sadness at parish responses to the pandemic, the isolation of those without access to computers, their regret about young people disconnecting from Church and their hopes for more collaborative decision making at the parish level.

The taskforce was boosted by the arrival of new members Judith Stuart, Catherine Blunt and Madeleine Banister in May.

In July the taskforce hosted a meeting with Archdiocesan members of the Plenary Council and all who attended reflected on the Plenary Council agenda in the light of the concerns of women of the Archdiocese.

Following an information session on *Women and Homelessness* with Anne Kirwan and Toni La Brooy from CatholicCare, the Taskforce has committed to support MacKillop House financially, pastorally and through advocacy.

A dinner to celebrate women's contribution to the Church in July was postponed and finally transformed into a Zoom event. On 3 September our guest speaker, Dr Margaret Beirne RSC explained how and why St Mary Magdalene, who is now honoured with the title of *Apostle to the Apostles*, despite having been maligned as a prostitute for several centuries.

One online reflection afternoon was held in November. The session, *Widen Our Gaze*, used insights from Pope Francis' book *Let Us Dream* to reflect on personal and societal struggles and our hopes for a future where God's mercy can break through. Forty-five women registered for the session.

The Taskforce opened an account with the Archdiocesan Provident Fund and as a result of donations now has a balance of \$5 000.

Communication across the Archdiocese continues to be challenging despite the use of an email list, website, media releases, Facebook posts, contributions to the online Archdiocesan calendar, letters to parishes and attempts to be listed on Parish Bulletins.

Membership: Andrea Dean (chair); Alison Weeks (deputy chair); Genevieve Colbert (treasurer); Selina Stanford (secretary); Beth Doherty (media officer); Lara Kirk; Katie Walsh-Smith; Catherine Conroy; Monica Phelan; Judith Stuart; Madelaine Banister; Cath Blunt; Sr Clare Condon SGS.