

Moggill-Mt Crosby explains their growth in attendance

In this edition of Focus Magazine, James O’Callaghan profiles Moggill-Mt Crosby Parish which recorded growth in the most recent Annual Parish Returns data.

It has less than 50 parishioners every Sunday but the Moggill-Mt Crosby Parish continues to buck the trend of smaller churches by growing its congregation. We chat to Parish Priest in Charge, Bishop Rob Nolan, to find out what they are doing right.

Focus Magazine: Data reveals that the number of worshippers in your parish has grown over the last three years. What is going on?

Bishop Rob: God’s grace has certainly been apparent in our congregation’s increase over the past few years.

The Rev’d Jane Mitchell (2010 – 2014 part-time) laid a good foundation upon which we continue to build. During her time as Priest-in-Charge the parish joined the Natural Church Growth programme and consequently discovered areas of weakness in the parish’s life. There continues to be a very real intention to work on the weaker elements as exposed by the survey. Because of lack of finances, my appointment as Priest-in-Charge is a part-time one (three days per week). As with any faith community over time a number of people relocate, need to move into a care facility, become sick or die. These events can make a significant difference to the number of people at Sunday worship. However, our experience has been the number of new-comers has significantly out grown the number departing. A turning point has been an increase in spirituality and faithfulness in regular attendance at worship. A growing core of people do not see Sunday worship as an option but as a blessing. Gathering into community has nurtured interest

in one another’s well-being. This is, I believe, an example of God’s grace working in our faith community. The change of Sunday Worship time from 9.30am to 8.30am (after consultation) has proven to be another turning point. Social activities and excellent morning teas after Sunday worship foster a greater sense of community. Pastoral care has also been intentional. Keeping a close eye on each other, recognising and acknowledging God’s graciousness, involvement in worship (private and corporate) the blessings of being a united community have been turning points in parishioners’ lives.

Focus Magazine: Have you run introduction to Christianity/Disciple programs? Have you found them successful?

Bishop Rob: No specific Christianity/Disciple

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programme has been introduced. However, Bible studies, quiet mornings and opportunity for reflection and learning are now a norm in the parish.

Focus Magazine: What advice would you give

your brothers and sisters in other parishes?

Bishop Rob: What advice would I give to fellow clergy? The first dot point is the critical one.

- Maintain your own personal relationship with God through disciplined and intentional private prayer time.
- Encourage a parish prayer group to meet regularly and update prayer points.
- Follow up on new people and those who are missing from worship.
- Share and celebrate significant events in each other’s lives.
- Have a disciplined visitation programme or phone link with parishioners.
- Act early to deal with situations which have the potential to damage relationships.
- Be joyful and encouraging.

A word with long-term members

Stephen and Anne Greenwood have been worshipping at Moggill-Mt Crosby since 2008.

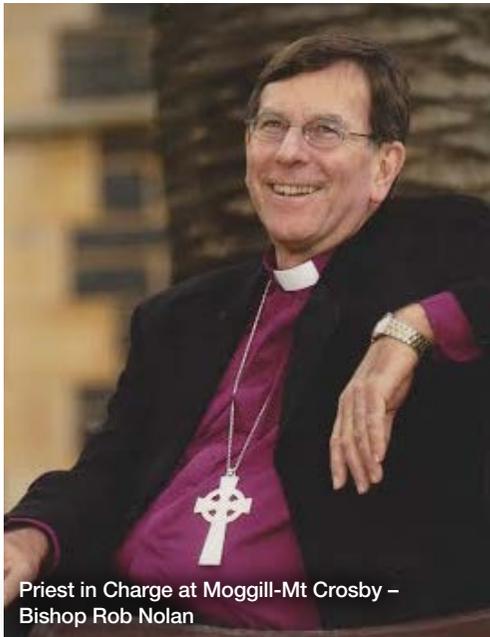
Focus Magazine: What keeps you worshipping at Moggill-Mt Crosby?

Stephen and Anne: St Michael’s is our local church and gives us a connection with the local worshipping Anglican community.

We receive sound biblical teaching which illuminates the scriptures.

Focus Magazine: Turning points in the life of the parish?

Stephen and Anne: The Rev’d Jane Mitchell was a unifying force in the parish. She fostered a strong sense of love, fellowship and pastoral care among the people and brought the two



Priest in Charge at Moggill-Mt Crosby – Bishop Rob Nolan

congregations of Moggill and Mt Crosby together. Bishop Rob Nolan has built on this inheritance, focussing on sound teaching, a strong parish prayer life, his personal pastoral care and the importance of sacramental worship and service.

Lay people re-established Bible study and discussion groups in 2008, resulting in enhanced fellowship. Prayer is now a fundamental part of lay involvement, meeting weekly. Our congregation is older in age and is attracting new older members. Morning tea after church on Sundays has become a time of real fellowship and not just an optional extra. Our commitment to outreach has been rekindled with an enhanced focus on supporting Inala Careforce and World Vision. Latterly we have introduced with Bishop Rob's encouragement, support for Bishop Daniel Abot's

ministry in the Sudan.

Parish Council is now more professionally organised and accountable for decisions it makes. Procedures include: proper minute taking, follow up, regular financial reports to the parish including fundraising for special projects, outreach and maintenance.

Focus Magazine: What has helped you grow in faith?

Stephen and Anne: Sound teaching, study, prayer and personal follow up by the parish priests through visits and phone calls.

Focus Magazine: What three things could be improved?

Stephen and Anne: Developments could include:

- Outreach to older members of our local community to demonstrate our Christian presence; and,
- Enhance our fledgling ministry to families with young children.

Thoughts of a relative newcomer

Jill Aveyard has been attending regular service at Moggill-Mt Crosby for just over two years after moving to the area. She said worship, Spirituality and prayer are some of the reasons why belonging to the church has given her life.

Focus Magazine: What drew you to the parish and what has helped you stay?

Jill: It is the Parish in which I now reside. The Parish Priest and parishioners have been so warm and welcoming. They are a friendly, sincere and happy group. I have been made to feel quite at home.

Focus Magazine: What is the growing edge of your life? How does belonging to the church

give you life?

Jill: Worship, Spirituality and Prayer. It sustains me, especially in times of emotional upheaval and pain.

Focus Magazine: What prompted you to start attending? Were there any teachings that you found particularly helpful?

Jill: I have been a member of the Anglican Church for as long as I can remember. I was Baptised and Confirmed in the Anglican Church and attended Sunday School before being admitted to the 'big Church'.

There are many teachings which I have found particularly helpful: The Lord's Prayer, The Ten Commandments and The Gospels are of special note and since I have been at my current Parish I have to add the Priest's sermons – they can be challenging and give one food for thought.

Focus Magazine: What three things could be improved?

Jill: Further growth in attendance would be a great start as prayerfully some younger folk might be drawn to the Christian way of life and from this we would:

- Receive more thought, input and interaction with our current parishioners, a lot of whom aren't so young anymore;
- Financial growth so as to provide for a full-time Priest, to attend to repair and maintenance issues and be in a position to increase our giving to further the Church's work both at home and abroad;
- Commence a Sunday School to teach the young folk about a more glorious way of life.

Stay tuned to the coming editions of Focus Magazine where more parishes will be profiled.



Moggill-Mt Crosby completed a Messy Church project.



Moggill-Mt Crosby

- Location: Metropolitan
- Church Size: Characterised as very small with between 50 and 100 people attending service each Sunday
- Key point: As with any faith community over time a number of people relocate, need to move into a care facility, become sick or die. These events can make a significant difference to the number of people at Sunday worship. However, our experience has been the number of new-comers has significantly out grown the number departing
- Key Point: Clergy should maintain their own personal relationship with God through disciplined and intentional private prayer time.