

THE LAKESIDER

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Issue #01

Serving the parish communities of Booragul Warners Bay, Morisset and Toronto

Dear Parish Family,

It's hard to believe that we are already almost halfway through 2026.

That means it has been six months since we began working more closely together as a region while continuing to celebrate the unique identity of each of our parish communities.

Recently, a parishioner asked what has been happening across the region, and that made me realise it might be time for a newsletter to share some of the stories, events, and initiatives that we simply cannot fit into the weekly bulletin.

I hope this newsletter helps keep us connected and informed about the many ways God is at work throughout our region.

Let me know what you think!

Welcome Fr Patrick Swaray CSSp

Fr Patrick Swaray CSSp arrived in the Region in June 2026. A Spiritan priest from Sierra Leone, he was ordained on 22 July 2005 and has served in missionary assignments across South Africa, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and South Sudan. In January 2026, he began a new pastoral assignment in Australia.

Speaking about his ministry in Australia, Fr Patrick said, "I commit myself to embracing Australian culture and learning from the local Church while remaining faithful to the Spiritan charism." He also expressed his desire to build positive and drawing on his extensive missionary experience, Fr Patrick hopes to contribute to the Church's mission of justice, solidarity, and evangelisation while remaining open and available to the pastoral needs of the communities he serves. Welcome, Fr Patrick!



Lakeside Region Pastoral Council

The Lakeside Pastoral Council has met three times so far this year.

The initial sessions focused on formation of the Council, getting to know one another, and gaining a deeper understanding of the role and purpose of a Pastoral Council within our regional community.

The next gathering, to be held on Monday 20 July at 6.30 pm at St Mary's Warners Bay, will focus on the vision of synodality promoted by the late Pope Francis and continued by Pope Leo.

All parishioners are warmly invited to attend. Further details will be provided closer to the date.

In the coming months, we hope to share a group photograph of the Council members so that parishioners can become familiar with those representing their communities.

Farewell to Our Lady Help of Christians Church Boolaroo

The month of May was an emotional time for the Boolaroo community as parishioners gathered to give thanks for and farewell Our Lady Help of Christians Church. Opened in 1961, the church had served generations of faithful people. In recent years, however, significant structural issues made it increasingly difficult to keep the building open without major restoration works costing more than the parish can afford. Following careful consideration, the decision was made in 2024 to close the church.



On the 19th May, the community gathered for a Liturgy of Lament, a prayerful and reflective celebration that provided space to share stories, shared tears and even laughter as we honoured the building's long history of service, and look with hope towards the future.



The Closing Liturgy was celebrated on the 23rd May and was attended by a large congregation, including many former parishioners who travelled from near and far to be present.

During the liturgy, prayers of thanksgiving were offered at the church's sacred places, including the baptismal font, the Shrine to Our Lady, the Stations of the Cross, the ambo, and the presidential chair.

At the conclusion of the celebration, all present were invited to kiss the altar before leaving the church in a final procession. As the doors were closed for the last time, the words were proclaimed:

“With thanks to God for all the good accomplished here, the Church of Our Lady Help of Christians, Boolaroo, is now closed.”

While this marked the end of an important chapter in the life of the community, it was also a moment of gratitude for the faith, memories, and countless lives touched through the ministry of the church over many decades.

What happens next?

At the Parish Assembly in 2025, the decision was made that when the church would close that the Boolaroo site be sold. This includes both the church and presbytery. The proceeds from the sale will remain with the parish and be used to undertake necessary repairs and maintenance at St Mary's Warners Bay and St Michael's Booragul, while also helping to establish a sustainable income stream to support the long-term future of the parish.



This past week, the Newcastle Herald ran a story about the sale of the property (though it might be best not to read it if the closure still makes you feel sad!). Expressions of interest will close at the end of July, after which we will review any interest from prospective purchasers. At this stage, there are no confirmed buyers.

Over the coming months, furnishings and sacred objects from Our Lady Help of Christians Church will gradually find new homes in the parish churches where they can continue to serve our worshipping communities. We are also hopeful that the Shrine to Our Lady will soon be relocated to St Mary's Warners Bay, allowing this much-loved Shrine to remain part of parish life.

Return to Sunday Masses at St Michael the Archangel, Booragul

With the closure of Our Lady Help of Christians Church, Boolaroo, the Saturday Vigil Mass has now moved to St Michael the Archangel Church, Booragul. In preparation for this transition, the church received a fresh coat of paint and a significant upgrade to its audio-visual system, incorporating the latest technology to enhance the liturgical experience.



We quickly discovered that the church's lighting - both inside and outside the building - requires attention. To assist us, a lighting engineer is currently providing advice on the best options to improve visibility, safety, and the overall environment of the church.

We hope these improvements can be completed in the coming weeks and thank parishioners for their patience and understanding as we continue to make St Michael's a welcoming and safe place for worship.

Vision for St Michael's Hall Booragul

The St Michael's site sits roughly halfway for the region. It is the meeting place for the Pastoral Council and Finance Committee.

I am currently working with both the Pastoral Council and Finance Committee about how we could better utilise the hall in the future. My vision would be a place where people can come and have their meetings or just come for a coffee and a read.

The Diocesan Library hopefully may be able to offer some books etc for people to read or for lending and save travel into the Cathedral...stay tuned on that one!

Morisset celebrated Pentecost with an International Flavour.



On Pentecost Sunday, the Gospel reminds us that the disciples went out proclaiming the Good News in every language.

Morisset Parish celebrated this beautifully, with parishioners from many nations taking part - bringing up the gifts in traditional dress and praying the Lord's Prayer in ten different languages.

The community recognised that over 50% of the congregation comes from diverse cultural backgrounds, representing around twenty different countries.

Parishioners were invited to share food from their cultures and, where possible, to wear traditional dress.

Fifteen people also contributed to a shared morning tea, which was described as truly spectacular, ranging from hot curries to Australian pavlova - ensuring no one left hungry.

This joyful celebration highlighted the richness of our multicultural community and offers a wonderful opportunity for all our parishes to continue celebrating the diversity and gifts of all who make up our Church family next Pentecost.

What do you think?

Toronto News



A few weeks ago, the parish was approached by John Sandy to see if we could help him. John Sandy arrived in Australia from Sierra Leone, (country of Fr Patrick also) West Africa, in 2011 as a refugee. Since settling in Australia, he has built a life dedicated to supporting others and is currently

employed within our Catholic school system, where he works with vulnerable students and their families.

In 2023, he had the opportunity to return to Sierra Leone for the first time in twelve years, where he witnessed challenges faced by many individuals and families, including rising living costs, limited access to resources, and economic hardship.

Motivated by these experiences, he began a community support initiative for vulnerable children and families in the area where he grew up, collecting donations of clothing, shoes, household items, school supplies, and other essentials to be shipped in a container to Sierra Leone for distribution to those most in need. One of the key challenges has been securing a suitable location for the container.

We offered to help. John is sincerely grateful to the Toronto Parish for generously providing space for this purpose. John says... "this initiative reflects a spirit of compassion, generosity, and partnership, and I thank all who have contributed, praying that God will bless the Toronto Parish and everyone supporting this project".

Other Toronto news....



New neighbours are coming!

In the coming week, we will be renting out the presbytery to a family with several children, and we hope they will feel warmly welcomed into our parish community.

As they will require access to both garages, we will need to relocate the parish bus. In the meantime, the bus will be parked in the church car park near where the Vinnies bins used to be.

Over the coming months, we will work towards finding a more suitable and weather-protected permanent location for the bus.



Thank you to all

Last month we said farewell to Fr Peter, and we pray for his safe return home and continued recovery of health. Fr Peter also asked that his sincere thanks be passed on to all who made him feel so welcome and to those who attended his farewell celebrations. As you can see there is much happening across the region.

On behalf of Fathers Paul, Patrick, John, and myself, I extend heartfelt thanks for your ongoing support, encouragement and challenges. It is a privilege for us to serve our regional families, and we hold you in our prayers - please keep us in yours as well. As I conclude, thank you also to those who helped me celebrate 30 years of priestly ministry - enjoy the photos!

Fr Darryl Mackie
Parish Priest - Lakeside Pastoral Region