



AMICI

Volume 23 Issue 1

Friends of St Augustine Newsletter

“Walking Together”

Winter 2023

Dear Friends of St. Augustine,

As new Leaders for Friends 2023 we very much feel that we stand upon the shoulders of some truly wonderful former National leaders.

Anne Halloway	Peter Moriarty	1999 – 2001
Paul Griffiths		2001 – 2004
Mary McCormick	Monica Meagher	2004 – 2007
Maureen Atkins	Ruth McGowan	2007 – 2010
Sylvia Phillips		2010 – 2013
Sylvia Phillips		2013 – 2016
Jacky Worthington		2016 – 2019
Jacky Worthington		2019 – 2023

It is with a quiet sense of excitement that we embark on the next stage of our Augustinian journey, sustained by the experience and insights gleaned from our recent National Congress – “Walking together”.

Fr. Joe invited us to consider the nature of our mission and each of us embraces this as an individual – and yet we can only accomplish this, as did Augustine, in our relationships with others: family, friends and community. We’re not solo travellers as we journey to God, but are privileged to walk together, showing friendship and supporting one another in myriad ways.

The Congress experience allowed us to be together once again, albeit with the benefit of zoom technology to overcome the difficulty of travelling. There are other challenges which need to be addressed and we are hopeful that we have begun to better understand some of them as we have been having phone conversations with group Leaders. These discussions have brought the joy of sharing and highlighted the need to strengthen the ties binding us together in Augustine. With him as our guide, we seek ways to create and foster opportunities for communication, for friendship, for being Church and for Friends of St. Augustine to flourish. We hope to build on the History of Friends already established, on the friendships already fostered and on the leadership set out before us. And now it becomes our opportunity to take Friends into the future as laity in a Synodal Church.

Mary McCormick

Judith Duncan

From The Confessions, 11.28.38

“When I am about to sing a song, it exists only in anticipation. As I begin to sing, the notes are plucked off and committed to the past. In my present moment, my attention is concentrated on the process of singing notes still anticipated and sending them into the past where they live in memory.

The longer the song continues the more the notes in memory increase and anticipated notes decrease until finally the realm of expectation is used up. The song is now finished and no longer sounds. It is only remembered. The same process happens in the song we sing with our lives where the various notes are the things we do through our times.”

Chaplains

Previous Paul Maloney OSA

Present Dave Austin OSA

Local Leaders

Mareeba Jeanette Hartley

Cairns Gina Rossbach

Coorparoo Sylvia Phillips

Gold Coast M. Boehme

Nth. Harbour J. Worthington

St Clair Lorenz Herft

South Yarra Judith Duncan

Formation

Maureen Atkins

Membership! Are you signed up to receive each Newsletter?

Honouring Paul Maloney OSA

Mary McCormick, *History of Friends*

Along with each copy of *Amici*, members have also received copies of the Prayer Resource Guide. When we look back on so many copies of the Prayer Resource Guide (21+ times 4) the words of the song, *Strong and Constant* come to mind. For Paul Maloney OSA as Chaplain has certainly been that. We have appreciated his strong and constant contribution to the overall development of Friends, to the development of lay leadership, and he has prepared thoughts and resources during all those years. He has offered us many reflections, thoughtful writings, references to the spirituality of Augustine, and, for all of those twenty-one years. He has shared so much of his own prayer life, encouraging members to take up opportunities to deepen their spirituality and to be refreshed by very personal reflections.



2019 International Laity Congress, Rome
Sylvia Phillips, Paul Maloney OSA
Jacky Worthington, and Dave Austin OSA

Whenever there had been a Friends event Paul offered comment, praise and ongoing reflection. Preparation for Congresses both here in Australia and overseas saw Paul involved. We all delighted in any travel undertaken by Paul. News of the Province, the Friends groups, or, in fact, all manner of news was present in the guide and, in turn, prayed about. Life experiences linked to Augustinian spirituality became the key message. His visits to local groups were always appreciated.

Much blessing and appreciation goes to Paul.

Welcoming Dave Austin OSA

Maureen Atkins, *Formation Coordinator*



Welcome to Fr. Dave Austin OSA as he begins his new role as Chaplain to the Friends of St. Augustine. We extend our congratulations to him on this appointment and we acknowledge the depth of experience he brings to this position.

Fr. Dave was a member of the working party that explored different ways to form a lay association. Evidence of his enthusiasm and support for the Friends has continued since the initial planning. He invited parishioners to join Friends in 1999 when he was parish priest in Kyabram. In 2001 he had a vital role in preparing for the first Congress in Echuca. Since this time he has attended National Congresses and numerous gatherings of Friends; he has participated in International Congresses for the laity, as well as working on International Committees. In his roles as Provincial, Parish Priest and Educator, he has demonstrated his commitment to the role of the laity in the Church and encouraged people to claim their baptismal responsibility through sharing the Good News in the Gospel.

The Friends of Saint Augustine emerged at the beginning of the 21st Century. Over twenty years later, there are changes in the Church and in society. We face challenges, but they can point to opportunities. The Fifth Plenary Council in Australia provided a pathway for listening to the voices of all the people, and our recent National Congress focused on the theme of walking together. Fr. Dave brings his gifts of listening and walking with people to his new role; valuable skills for discernment. In his new role, he is walking beside the Friends of Saint Augustine who are on the road to the Church of the future in the Australian context. May he continue to be guided by the Spirit as he communicates his spiritual insights based on the Good News, and influenced by the story of Saint Augustine.

Reflecting on the 2023 National Lay Congress Anne & Michael Halloway, Nth. Harbour

When we first heard of plans by Friends to hold a National Congress this year Michael and I were very keen to attend. The themes to be presented by keynote speakers Fr. Joseph Farrell OSA and Patricia Gemmell involved the work of the Plenary Council and the meaning of Synodality, two topics we wished to learn more about.

The Congress began with a gathering at Coorparoo RSL Club on Friday evening which enabled all to meet new friends and others we had met previously over the years, including Fr. Joe Farrell OSA. This gathering provided a positive vibe for the Congress, there was a sense of happy anticipation and togetherness as we looked forward to the two days ahead. This atmosphere lasted throughout and I am sure we all felt united by a common goal as members of Friends.

Although most attending, and by no means all, were of the 'mature' age group it is evident we need to work towards attracting new young, and not so young members. As the church today is facing challenges, the speakers encouraged membership of groups like Friends as an effective way to support and inform lay people and help them understand what is taking place as these challenges are being faced by the Synod.

The availability of Zoom to allow others far distant to attend was a great benefit and the technical support at Villanova College to arrange and maintain that facility added greatly to the success of the program.

In addition to what Michael and I absorbed from the talks and discussions I have contacted some folk who attended via Zoom at North Harbour in Sydney thinking it would be of interest to seek impressions from those attending via a different format. Ursula Halloway participated with that group and mentioned that the discussions following talks were lively and varied. Some points below were contributed by that group. At the Congress our discussion groups comprised a mix of different ages and genders and several had an Augustinian Father participating. Different points of view surfaced and this teased out extra factors to consider following both talks.

We were struck by Fr. Joe's talk on the relevance of the figure of Christ on the Cross and our mission in life. He highlighted the dimensions of The Cross: ABOVE - reaching to God the Father, SURROUNDING - arms outstretched with acceptance and love for one another, and BELOW - the hidden or unknown aspects of our direction and influences in life. He referred to the influence on us of parents, siblings, partners, teachers and all who cross our path.

We were challenged to consider, do we have positive or negative reactions to others? Do we accept different points of view? Fr. Joe blended St. Augustine's teachings on building friendship, supporting one another and acceptance of others and likened that to the requirements for building a synodal church. He referred to St. Monica's example - perseverance in prayer, putting others first, cultivating a peaceful heart and trusting in God.

Both speakers highlighted the importance of 'walking together', lay and clergy, as brothers and sisters, using our gifts to support one another and share our faith. Augustine teaches us to be "One Heart, One Mind on the way to God". To form a Synodal Church we must be a listening people, listening and discerning, having the courage to face differences always seeking peaceful solutions. Both clergy and laity are essential parts of the church walking and working together. Programs like Alpha, Prayer Groups, Mens Groups and Friends of St. Augustine etc, help greatly as we nourish our faith together.

Patricia Gemmell stressed the importance of the priests and the people being unified and involved as this is a crucial platform in achieving a synodal church with clergy and laity in harmony and in many parishes that is not happening. She stressed that we ALL need to play our part and suggested the need for a trained Facilitator in Synodality as many do not understand how it applies and feel threatened by change.

Pope Francis stresses three essential elements of the synodal process: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION and MISSION. With this in mind, during discussion mention was made for lay members to arrange more social contact with their pastors to get to know one another better which would result in more collaboration. One way is to invite our priests to share a meal, eating out or at our homes. Our group felt that this was happening in Augustinian parishes, however, could always be improved as new priests arrive to minister. I am sure we all felt particularly supported during the Congress with seven Fathers participating in addition to Fr. Joe Farrell.

We look back on The Congress with gratitude for the nourishing experience of coming together with gifted speakers who challenged us to go forward in Faith and Friendship as the Church evolves. We were reminded of the need for ALL to play their part in our Church and came away remembering that Faith is meant to be an ACTIVE gift, not a Passive one.

Appreciation of Jacky Worthington National Leader 2016 – 2023

When Jacky Worthington once again took on the role of National Leader in 2019 she could not have imagined the unique challenges she would have to face as Leader in her second term. During the pandemic she held things together and continued to show the leadership which she had been demonstrating since 2016. She made the Congress experience accessible to groups in different states with the 'travelling congresses'. Every letter from Jacky in *Amici* or *The Augustinian* contained news of Friends activities which was expressed with warmth and the love of sharing. She describes the ethos of Friends succinctly: "Through friendship and sharing in a supportive environment we use Augustine as our guide as we seek to answer the questions: How can I live my faith? How can I be an authentic Christian in today's world?"

She has been able to speak with a personal voice and write as a true friend of Augustine. We owe her an immense debt of gratitude and express our heartfelt thanks to her for her leadership.

2023 National Congress for Augustinian Laity – 'Walking Together'



'serious discussion'



Leadership abounds..



Badging new members



'on zoom'



*Patricia Gemmell
Jacky Worthington
Joe Farrell OSA*



'a listening people'



'lively and vibrant'

FYI. International Congress For Augustinian Laity - Rome July 10-15, 2024

Editors	Judith Duncan	0417 309 747	judithpduncan@outlook.com
	Mary McCormick	0419 134 075	mary_mccormick@bigpond.com
Chaplain	Dave Austin OSA	0419 265 317	dave.austin@osa.org.au

Our Thanks to.....
 Dave Austin OSA
 Maureen Atkins
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