

Family Groups

PASSIONIST
FAMILY GROUP
MOVEMENT



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A Ministry of the Passionists

AUTUMN 2026

To our Passionist Family Group Family...

We hope that you have all enjoyed a blessed Easter.

Autumn reminds us that change can be beautiful, inevitable and necessary. Autumn can act like a mirror, revealing the changes that have quietly taken place in our own lives. Just as the leaves shift from green to gold, amber and red, we too go through transformations — some visible and some subtle.

Life may be reminding us to take better care of ourselves, rest more and make space for the things that bring peace and joy. Nurturing is at the heart of who we are. Echoing the Peace Prayer's reminder that "It is in giving that we receive", we recognise that caring for others also nourishes something deep within ourselves.

Let's keep connected: *a simple phone call, a cuppa, arranging transport for Family Group events, sending a card... Any small gesture makes a big difference towards staying close and supporting one another.*

Thank you for your ongoing work at being "Family" to each other.

Warmest Regards: *Trish, Roger, Russell, Celine, Mary, Frances, Fr Brian CP & Tina*



Our PFGM Aims & Goals

- *to share and celebrate faith*
- *to support one another (especially in need): reaching out to and including others*
- *to build community like an extended family*
- *to give example to our children*



Sunset: Lake Wendouree in Ballarat, Victoria on the day of the autumn equinox 2026

The PFGM proudly Congratulates:



Annette Gutteres OAM - New South Wales

Annette Gutteres of our NSW Passionist Family Group Leadership Team, has been awarded the *Professor Dame Marie Bashir Medal* in recognition of her **outstanding leadership and lifelong contribution to inclusive and special education in NSW.**

A respected former secondary school teacher, academic and advocate, Annette has dedicated more than four decades to advancing equity in education, particularly for students with disability and additional needs. She has held key leadership roles within the Professional Teachers' Council NSW and the Professional Association for Learning Support (PALS), championing professional standards, teacher development and inclusive policy reform. Throughout her career, Annette has been a strong voice for systemic improvements in special education, aligning practice with contemporary disability frameworks and promoting accessibility, inclusion and diversity across schools in New South Wales.

The medal, named in honour of Dame Marie Bashir, recognises Annette's significant impact on teaching, educational leadership and her enduring commitment to ensuring every student is supported to thrive.

Regina Huning OAM - Victoria

In the St Francis of Assisi, Mill Park Parish Newsletter, Regina was described as, 'a stalwart of our parish. She has made a contribution that has deeply impacted the lives of many.'

Ms Regina Leung-Huning said she felt humble when she found out about her successful OAM nomination this year, saying, "It was an enormous, amazing surprise."

Regina commented that her loved ones, especially her son and daughter, would be very proud when they found out, predicting that they would say, 'Mamma you deserve the award and must accept it.'

Now retired, Regina said that she is most proud of her nursing career, working in the emergency department and operating theatre. In the years before coming to Australia in 1976, Regina moved from her home in Hong Kong to the United Kingdom, spending nine years studying and working in nursing. She also spent one year working in the United States. "I retired almost 15 years ago - how time flies," she said.



Regina has enjoyed local volunteering since moving to Mill Park as a single mum in 1986. "I helped organise fundraising to build our church ... and the church community at large."

From 1989-1999, Regina was the chairperson for the St Francis of Assisi parish fete. Regina coordinates the Mill Park Passionist Family Groups in her parish. Her own group invited Regina to spend Australia day with them - "What a coincidence ... I could share my exciting good news with them, after my family."

Regina describes her children as her tower of strength, supporting her through her work in the church and the Whittlesea Chinese Association (WCA). Regina was vice-president of the WCA from 2013-2015 and president for eight years (2015-2023). "I organised weekly activities like outings, indoor games, tai chi, singing and dancing." Regina is now the honorary president, still visiting the sick and elderly and advocating for their needs. "They need free transport to take them to fun activities... to enjoy the day with good company," asserted Regina.

Regina was inspired to volunteer and advocate because of her mother and teachers: "They inspired me to help the sick, the less fortunate... the old and lonely... and so on."



Family Group Day at Marrickville, New South Wales: February 2026

The Ministry of Family Groups was the theme for the day when Family Group folk gathered in the Stradbroke Room of the the Passionist Province Centre at Marrickville on the 28th February.



Father Brian Traynor CP delivered the first Presentation on the theme of Belonging...giving all attendees much to reflect upon as we endeavour to be **welcoming, inclusive communities**. Group discussions followed on the following: i) Ministries, ii)Activities to promote interaction, iii)School to Parish Building and iv) Being a Caring community.

Fathers Ron Davoren and Kevin Dance from the Marrickville Province Community were able to attend and their presence and contributions were warmly welcomed.

After lunch, Paul Casey delivered a very thoughtful talk on Nurturing....a summary of this talk is available*.

Regional Coordinators were in attendance bringing their wisdom and experience to the discussions: Newcastle: Pauline and John McGrath; Parramatta : Elizabeth and Dennis Farrar; Wollongong

Sydney parishes represented were **Concord, Concord West, Marrickville, Strathfield and Terrey Hills**. Father Pasquale, the Parish Priest from Greenacre also attended as he is now establishing Family Groups in his parish. Sydney Coordinators and organisers of the day, Annette and Tony Guterres, were very appreciative of the efforts of all who participated in so many ways. Interest was expressed for similar days to be held in the future, where Family Group folk from other parishes can come along and reflect together on the role of our Family Groups in building caring, connected communities. - **Paul Casey** *Email: pjmecasey@gmail.com Phone: 0493 456 421



Photo From Annette Guterres: Pauline McGrath, Paul Casey, Kerry Wijngaarden, Dennis Farrar, Elizabeth Farrar, Tony Guterres, Annette Guterres, Fr Brian Traynor CP, Fr Ron Davoren CP, Michael Price, Paul Wijngaarden, John McGrath

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We invite and welcome contributions to our Passionist Family Group Movement Newsletter.

Please send your news/articles and photos to the editor at:
pfgm.victas@gmail.com

A copy of this Newsletter and previous PFGM Newsletters can be found on our website: www.pfgm.org

Vale: Maureen Burford - New South Wales

Maureen and John Burford were totally involved with the initial spread of the Passionist Family Group Movement that had begun in 1972 at the Parish of St. Anthony in the Fields at Terrey Hills in NSW, the first and only parish with Family Groups for following ten years.

In 1982, the Burfords worked closely with the Parish Priest and parishioners of St Bernadette's in Castle Hill, in order to help establish Family Groups there and then in their own parish of St Madeleine's, Kenthurst.

The Burfords' PP was not convinced about introducing Family Groups into his parish but tenacious Maureen, never gave up. She persevered with her strong belief that the Family Groups would help their parish build community through people getting to know one another and therefore creating a sense of belonging which would help them support one another, not only in the good times but in times of sorrow also.

Maureen was the heart of her own family as was mentioned repeatedly by family members at her funeral. Her heart reached out to everyone she met along the way – always with the happiest of smiles and warm greeting.

During the three International Family Group Conferences held in NSW between 1994 and 2001, Maureen and John always encouraged and enticed big numbers of Family Group members to attend. Maureen seemed to get a YES from everyone.

Thank you Maureen, with John at your side, for over forty years of personal dedication to the PFGM.

- Many thanks to Barbara Lunnon for this information. NSW PFGM Coordinators, the Farrars, represented the PFGM at Maureen's funeral.



What are you looking for?

Jesus' first words in John's gospel are, "What are you looking for?"

He had turned around to ask this of two disciples of John the Baptist who were following him. The men did not answer this question, but they asked him where he was staying: 'Can we visit your home?' As it was at late in the day, it is likely, given middle-Eastern hospitality, that they stayed the night and that they became disciples.

What did these two men see or experience during that time? Perhaps they heard an answer to 'what' they were seeking. In fact, later in John's gospel, Jesus will ask a slightly different question with far deeper meaning. It was when he was arrested in Gethsemane that he asked the soldiers, "Who are you looking for?"

He asked this same question of Mary Magdalene when she was seeking him at the empty tomb.

Jesus' disciples came to understand that answering the second question also answered the first. *So, what or who are we seeking?* When we apply those questions to our life in Passionist Family Groups, I hope we would answer that we are looking for belonging, for community, for opportunities to give and receive love and true fellowship. Hopefully, also, we would use the 'who' we are looking for to answer that, what we are seeking is to give our lives over, not just to imitating Jesus, but to being one with and in him. How will people know we are Jesus' disciples: "That we have love for one another". (John 13:35).

So, when you are planning and engaging in monthly activities, I would hope these functions are not seen as social get-togethers but rather as encounters with those with whom we have committed ourselves to be 'family' in Jesus' spirit of acceptance, compassion, forgiveness, care, outreach, support, enjoyment and true belonging. This gives us a glimpse of the deep seeking we each have, when we agree to invite others to come and see where we are 'staying'; to spend time with us. That demonstrates that we have love for one another!

- Brian Traynor CP

'Relationships Are Gold'

Southern Team Gathering in Ballarat, Victoria

at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish in Wendouree - 21st March 2026

On Saturday 21st March, the Southern Team held a biennial Passionist Family Group gathering that was open to all Family Group people across Victoria and Tasmania. The venue was the Wendouree Parish Hall in the large country city of Ballarat in western Victoria. Ballarat is well known for the infamous Eureka Stockade of 1854: *The Eureka Stockade in Ballarat was a pivotal rebellion by gold miners against unjust colonial licensing and authoritarian rule. It is often regarded as the birthplace of Australian democracy.*

The Southern PFGM Gathering was a wonderful day with inspiring and enjoyable talks delivered by Fr Brian Traynor, Sr Karen Lea Englebretsen and Tim Horlock, focusing on the history of Family Groups, family systems and golden relationships. These provoked some good discussion and opportunities for various Family Group members to share ideas with other members whom they may not have met before.

Special thanks, also, to Ballarat locals, Tony Wynd, Teresa Treffry and Marica Hingston for agreeing to share their experiences of Family Groups. They each presented interesting and informative testimonies of their personal perspectives of being a Family Group leader/member.

Adding to the relevance of the day, our theme **'Relationships Are Gold'** was certainly evident with new connections being made and older connections re-ignited through the chatting, sharing and goodwill throughout our time together in Ballarat, both during the day and for those who gathered for dinner at the hotel by Lake Wedouree that evening.

Needless to say, as at most Family Group functions, there was an abundance of food – and our particular thanks go to the Our Lady Help of Christians community for the delicious morning and afternoon teas so generously provided. (Lunch was catered commercially.) Thanks, too, to all those hard workers in the kitchen and to those parishioners who, as needed, moved furniture so efficiently and effortlessly.

We are extremely grateful to Our Lady Help of Christians' Family Groups, parishioners and the school principal for the warm welcome and incredible effort that they put into hosting our gathering. Ninety-six people had registered their intention to attend although, unfortunately, some had to pull out at the last minute.

The day was a success due to the selfless time given by so many and we were blessed with glorious weather on the day of the autumn equinox. We look forward to seeing you at our next gathering.

With gratitude,

Trish Gurney, on behalf of the Southern PFGM Team



* Ballarat displayed its very best weather for us on that day and many of the gathering's participants enjoyed dinner at a hotel opposite Lake Wedouree over which the setting sun provided a stunning autumnal display. (See Page 1)

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Seven Hills NSW

- Dennis & Elizabeth Farrar (Parramatta Diocese)

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Seven Hills is in the City of Blacktown. It has long been an area with a highly multicultural population and that certainly characterises the latest Family Groups in the Diocese.

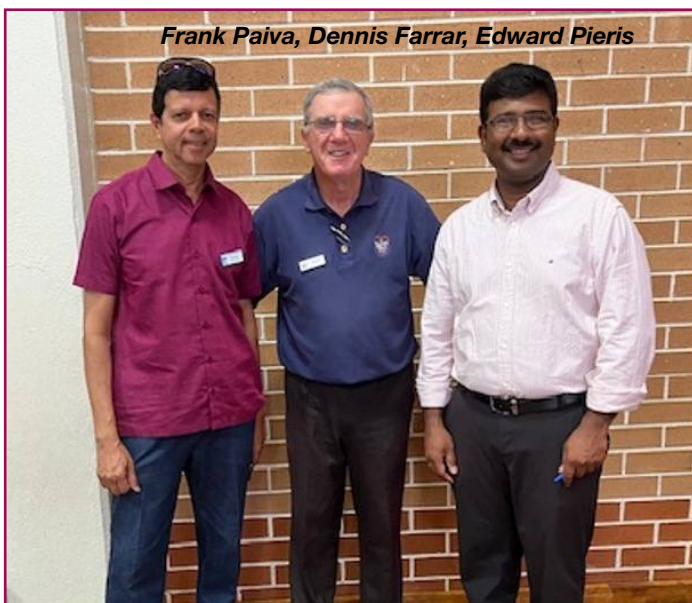
In 2023, I met with the Parish Council a few times to let them know what Family Groups could offer a Parish and how Family Groups operate. Encouraged by Parish Priest, Fr Henry Huu Duc Tran, two groups subsequently formed and, now, they are really enjoying the growing camaraderie and opportunities to become more synodal in their understanding of Church. The numbers at the original 'Sign-up Sunday' gathering in 2024 were fairly modest but within a year, things have changed as the photos show.



One story heard on that first day was from Fernando who told me that, when he arrived in Australia from Sri Lanka with his wife and child, he left behind his entire family and had no contacts here. Joining a Family Group has really filled that void for the family. He loves the Parish now that he knows people and he can confidently contribute his talents there.

The Parish now has two Family Groups: The *Joyful Journey Group* which is led by Edward Pieris and the *Colourful Rainbow Group* is led by Frank Paiva. The Rainbow Group consists of older to middle-aged folk with no children at home while the Joyful Journey Group has families with children. Both groups' leaders are doing a terrific job caring for their Groups and allowing their Faith to come through. Fr Henry spoke very positively to the Groups at their first anniversary gathering last year. Below is an extract from a simple survey distributed at the anniversary.

"Family Groups have indeed changed the way we look at our Parish. It was amazing to find that another family in our group was from the same country and hometown as I was! We even attended the same local church. Now here we are, decades later, attending OLOL in Seven Hills as strangers until the formation of the Family Group which brought us together. It was also spiritually uplifting and heart-warming to see the whole group praying and rallying around a person in remission from cancer."



Frank Paiva, Dennis Farrar, Edward Pieris



Also from the Farrars: A photo of a few of the *Springwood Parish Family Group* who met in a local park on the January 22nd Day of Mourning after the tragic Bondi Beach attack. Candles were lit, prayers said and of course a cuppa was shared as we remembered the victims –all over in an hour. The two younger people are our grandchildren.

News from a Passionist Family Group Parish in Brunswick, Maine, USA*
- from Karin Congleton

On November 8, 2025, the Family Group members at St. Charles in Brunswick, Maine, USA, celebrated 30 years of gatherings, friendships and love. When people entered the church, they saw photos of Family Groups, of Father Peter McGrath CP and several letters of congratulations from Australia for our 30 years together. A video sent by Barbara Lunnon was played on a loop, giving those who never met had Fr Peter and Barbara a glimpse of who they are. The church hall was full of happy noise: children running and squealing with delight, teens doing their thing—talking, laughing—the way that teens do and adults catching up with each other, chatting about families, trips, current events and more. Our parish Family Group leader said grace, then talked a bit about how Family Groups came to be at St. Charles. She asked the group members to sit with those not in Family Groups to enjoy the potluck offerings and to get to know each other.

About seventy people gathered for this celebration. Among them were members of three original family groups in addition to other groups we invited. They included our RCIA group, a young adult (teen and early twenties) group, a new members' (of the congregation) group, and a moms' group. These groups meet regularly and were a great blend to our aging family groups. Several people in these groups expressed an interest in joining a Family Group. We will be working to include these groups to encourage a more cohesive church community.

Over the past 30 years, along with my husband, I've been a Family Group leader and then a group member. When we started Family Groups, we followed Father Peter McGrath's suggestions of what the composition of the groups should look like. What we've learned is that as families grow, children leave, people move, groups age, we have to be flexible and open ourselves to new ways of including and inviting members of our church community to join us. We continue to move forward to be a thriving part of our parish, to meet regularly, get to know and love the people in our groups, and to spread that sense of community throughout the congregation.

**This article was shared by Barbara Lunnon of New South Wales who writes, "I was fortunate to have assisted Peter McGrath C.P. in many early information gatherings with PPs in parishes in Maine USA prior to beginning Passionist Family Groups in six parishes in late 1995 in Auburn, Boothbay Harbor, Augusta, Mexico, Dixfield and Brunswick. Soon after, a further five parishes joined the original six."*

