

PARISH MANAGEMENT GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT, JANUARY 2012

INTRODUCTION

The principal purpose of this report is to provide an account of the activities of the Parish Management Group (PMG) in the past year. Some general observations on developments during 2011 are also included. With Canon Denis now restored to health, there has been far less need for support from visiting clergy this year though Canon Bennie Noonan is still a frequent visitor to say the 11 o'clock Mass on a Sunday.

CONSTITUTION OF THE PMG

We were pleased to welcome Deacon Philip Pugh to the PMG when he joined the parish in January 2011. In May we also welcomed the return of Ros Penn as Vice Chair with special responsibility for the Parish Plan

After his sterling work in managing the premises project – of which more later - Michael Lawton resigned in November. While thanks were obviously passed to Michael for all he had done at the meeting I welcome this opportunity to more publically acknowledge his huge contribution to the groups' work

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMMES

There are two aspects to this year. Firstly we are in the hugely privileged position where, this autumn, no less than 4 adults took the 1st steps towards joining the church at this year's Easter Vigil. We are grateful to everyone who has supported them on their journeys. It is fair to say in its thirty years our church will never have seen an Easter Vigil quite like the one in prospect.

We have long been greatly served by our teams of catechists who provide religious education to our children and prepare them to receive the sacraments. Under the leadership of Helen Burgess, the PMG member responsible for this area of activity, the programme and how it should be delivered has been reviewed to create a fully integrated strategy which takes children from the early stages, either - attending Little Uns or starting at Pre-Communion classes - through to Confirmation and beyond. It is a long term programme where we will not see the full benefits until several cohorts have gone through various stages but the aims in making it a more linked up process with completion of one stage being contingent on participation in the next are that: -

- The children are fully prepared for the sacraments they will receive
- We provide support to parents in this important work
- Fewer 'fall by the wayside' either after 1st Communion or post-Confirmation

The proposal received unanimous support from the PMG and implementation which is now under way.

The bishop will administer the sacrament of Confirmation on 18th July.

PREMISES PROJECT

Work began on this project on the 4th January with a very tight target for completion set by project manager Michael Lawton who was determined it would be ready in time for a Valentine's Day dinner. It was, for which we have to thank all those employed on site and Michael for his daily site visits to deal with issues immediately they arose. During my own site visit I was impressed by the very obvious organisation in what could easily have been mistaken as chaotic surroundings. An aspect particularly appreciated was that all this work was done without any disruption to scheduled Masses thanks to the active cooperation of the contractors.

Fundraising continued during the early part of the year towards meeting the parish's commitment to raise £25,000 towards the project cost so that our reserves were not wiped out. However, by September the PMG were very pleased to announce that this could stop as it was agreed that the balance would be taken from the funds the parish would receive from the Together in Faith initiative meaning that future fund raising can be targeted towards wider local, national or international needs.

The room has also been used to host the Bedfordshire Ecumenical Committee Forum, the Goldwork Group and the Pastoral Area's Justice and Peace Forum.

No action on Phase 2 of the project, deferred when our planning application was declined, has yet been taken.

SOCIAL

Building work meant that even regular activities had to be suspended until mid February when 'normal service was resumed.' In addition to the Valentine's Day dinner there have been a fundraising concert by Flitwick Singers, a Parish Walk to Pulloxhil I – which included a pub lunch - a Jazz afternoon at the Stables in Wavendon in conjunction with the Catenians, and a Less successful was an attempt to hold a quiz night and plans for a Christmas Bazaar had to be abandoned when too many regular helpers were otherwise committed this year.

However, the parish's biggest social success this year was the introduction of teas and coffees after 9 o'clock Mass on Pentecost Sunday. Initially planned to happen only when Sunday School did not need the Parish Room it was such resounding success that the Catechists agreed they should make other arrangements to allow it to continue every week. Huge thanks to Kate Mansford for getting this off the ground.



PLANNING

Work on the Parish's five year plan has continued. Roz Penn returned to the PMG to lead this area of activity. The next step is that the PMG will be holding a special meeting to pray, reflect and agree a shared vision to be achieved over this time frame and then identify what has to be done when, how and by whom to get there.

TOGETHER IN FAITH

What was clear once the purpose for the bishop's initiative was explained was that the diocese had a problem. The way chosen to solve it did raise a number of concerns initially but the outcome has been a response which is as staggeringly generous as it is humbling. It is taking time for all pledges to be finalised but the latest figures show that members of our parish have pledged overall £149,000. The project provided the diocese with slightly more than it needs to meet the three purposes for which the initiative was started which are **Care of sick and retired, clergy, Priest training and Formation of laity**

In addition it provides the parish with a reserve of almost £74,000. The PMG has already agreed that part of this should be used to meet our obligations for the completed building project and will be discussing shortly how to go about making sure that the parish benefits as much as possible from your generosity. Funds will be received gradually over the next 5 years.

OTHER AREAS ON WHICH THE PMG KEPT A WATCHING BRIEF

Safeguarding	The parish safeguarding representative continues as a member of the PMG so that it can be kept fully informed on this matter.
Health & Safety	This is something the PMG has always taken seriously. Our Health & Safety policies & documentation required updating to include the changes made by the Parish Room project. The opportunity was taken to incorporate best practice and as such the subject now features on the agenda of all our meetings.
Little 'Uns	This is an important social group within the parish, which also familiarises the very young with the church and encourages them to feel comfortable and confident in our community.
Ecumenical	The parish has participated in a wide range of ecumenical activities over the year including Women's World Day of Prayer in both Ampthill and Flitwick Good Friday Walk of Witness Ampthill and District Churches Together choir performances Pentecost in the Park Christian Prayer Stall at the Mind, Body and Soul Fair Christian Aid – we continue with this but our contribution is sadly way below that of other denomination so if anyone can help with this please contact

	<p>Eamonn Diver, the parish representative</p> <p>Macmillan - this year's event raised £100 but we now need a new co-ordinator for 2012 when the event will, as usual, be on the last Friday in September</p> <p>The parish is represented on the Ampthill Churches Together group by Judith Latham, Canon Denis, Suzanne Yates, their secretary, and Michael Lawton who also represents Ampthill Churches Together on the Bedfordshire Ecumenical Committee.</p>
Walking Humbly	Don Perrett continues as the parish representative on the Pastoral Area Council team.
Finance	An financial report for 2011 is attached as are the yearend figures showing the current financial position.
Youth	Chris Brennan attended World Youth Day in Madrid and provided us with a wonderful display about the event on his return. Huge thanks to all those who supported his fund raising which enabled him to take advantage of this memorable opportunity.

OTHER PARISH ACTIVITIES

Mothers' Prayers	This group has been part of our parish for more than ten years and continues to prosper.
Parish Prayer Group	This group meets most 1 st and 3 rd Tuesdays. The group adopted its new name this year to help emphasise the purpose of the group, which is to be busy praying in, and for our parish and its needs, to be more inclusive and able to extend a welcome to new people.
Micah Conversation	A very successful Micah Conversation was held over a number of weeks in the Autumn. Addressing the issues identified for action is now an ongoing process
Pilgrimages	Discussion to place to gain consensus about where to go next and Iona was chosen. Plans are now well in hand for this during July 2012
RCIA	RCIA provides a supportive learning environment for those interested in finding out more about the Catholic faith and possibly joining the Church. Deacon Philip's arrival was timely in occurring just as the previous co-ordinator relocated away from the

	parish.
SVP	The parish conference continues to flourish. Members continue to visit people in their homes, and residential and nursing homes. They also support a twinned conference in India and sponsor four students there as well. They have also supported the baby-feeding stations in Sudan. Appeals for food for the clients on BeCHaR have raised 732 tins of beans in the July appeal and over 600 gifts from the Giving Tree in December.
Tea and talk	After almost fifteen years it was decided that Tea and Talk had 'run its course' and it was time to call time on this activity. Thank you for all that the group has done for the parish in often unsung ways throughout that time
Teas after Mass	As mentioned above this is now a thriving social activity after both Sunday Masses and we look forward to it going from strength to strength
Music and Liturgy	Thank you to Astrid Brown for providing the music at the 9 o'clock Mass. We are grateful to Peter Miller for his continued support and enrichment of our 11 o'clock Masses and other activities; also to Hugh Davies and Alan Bevan who provide guitar accompaniment on occasion
Catechists	The core activities have continued but, as mentioned above, have now been put within a comprehensive development framework to support children and their families in learning about their faith
Children's Liturgy	After discussion at our July meeting, a small but significant change was made. The Children's Lectionary now is presented to the children who take it with them to the Parish Room, reinforcing the message that they receive the Word of God as the older congregation do. They return by processing with the Lectionary and their work at the end of the Offertory.
Altar Servers	Thank you to all those who do take part in this important service for the parish. We would love you to encourage your friends to join in too, so that more servers are available and both Sunday Masses could be covered.
New Liturgy	The new liturgy was introduced on 4 th September. Prior to this a number of workshops were organised by Deacon Philip to ensure parishioners were ready for the new Mass. Mass sheets with the new responses were purchased
Week of guided pray	Held in November, this was organised within the parish, with the support of trained prayer guides from other Churches locally. 12 people took part, mostly from the parish. Feedback was that the event was excellent. It is planned to offer a similar event every

	other year.
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THANK YOUs

The danger with attempting to thank people is the risk of leaving someone out, but one must try. There are many who do so much so quietly, and this acknowledgement is particularly aimed at them. They are the people who make things run smoothly and include: those involved in Sacristan duties: church cleaners; readers; extraordinary ministers of Word and Communion; those who take Communion to the sick and housebound; greeters at Mass; those who take, count, and bank the collection; and those who manage the administration and finance of the parish day to day.

PARISH STATISTICS FOR 2011

Average Mass attendance	330	Adults received	0	Marriages	4
Baptisms	8	First-Communion Candidates	12	Deaths	7

ANNE GADSDEN
 CHAIR, PARISH MANGEMENT GROUP
 JANUARY 2012