

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Pope Close, Flitwick



Parish Management Group (PMG)

Chris McMellon - Chair's Report 2013



During the last 12 months in which I have had the honour of being Chair of the Parish Management Group, much activity has taken place. In order to reflect this in a summary format, this year we have reports from the Parish Management Group committee members of the relevant areas.

Faith Development and Outreach – Deacon Philip Pugh

The review of our faith development activity is an overview of the parish's programme for Year of Faith. A wide range of activities was provided in order to appeal to different people and help them engage in their personal growth in faith. There were significant highlights in our past year. Sessions of formation in Catholic Social Teaching and Scripture started the year. We focused on doing something practical for those in need as a result of the social teaching, which resulted in the very successful launch of the food bank. The focus of much of we did for the year of faith was to enable people to uncover spirituality in their life. A day retreat at Buckden was centred on labyrinths; this was followed in the autumn by the immensely popular Life in the Spirit seminars. The final element of our year was the Week of Guided Prayer, which was well supported and added much to the life of individuals and the parish. Our work to reach out and to become a more welcoming parish, continues. We have initiated a regular 'welcome session' to allow people seeking to join or return to the church to come to a gentle and open session. It would be fair to say that this aspect of our parish life still has much scope to develop.

Catechism – Helen Burgess

We have had an exciting year in our parish watching our children's and young people's work grow and develop in keeping with our sacramental programme. We have a growing number of enthusiastic and committed catechists, many of whom were able to attend our parish catechists training day in June, and a few represent us at a pastoral area catechists training day in September. In November we were delighted to welcome so many children to the new term of programmes including Year 1 and Year 2 of First Holy Communion preparation. The pre-Confirmation group have also been busy and have now commenced Confirmation preparation. We are constantly trying to improve what we offer and are so grateful to all our parents/grandparents for the contribution they make as 'the first teachers of the faith'.

Health and Safety – John Fletcher

The annual safety inspection and risk assessment review of the church and grounds was carried out in September and did not identify any significant new safety risks. The results of a diocesan audit of our Health and Safety arrangements were received in 2013. The following is an extract from the executive summary. 'The level of health and safety consideration and application in this particular church, from both priest and the parish member who carries out the health and safety administrative role is to be highly commended. In particular, it was very refreshing to see a good level of knowledge of health and safety matters combined with good records.' The diocese has recently issued a safety manual which will require our own manual to be updated to comply. Arrangements include the need for a formal monthly check of higher-risk items. Work is ongoing to standardise the checks required with the aim of introducing these by April.

Finance 2013 – Hugh Davies

The measure of generosity from the parish is that in 13 second collections last year a total of £2,778.00 was raised. Our offertory (including standing orders) was a total of £38,082.00, which is £2.44 per week per Mass attendee. This is also one of the highest in the diocese, so a big 'thank you' for your generosity.

The problem is that there was a shortfall in our income against expenditure of an average of £82 per week. Last year's income (excluding TIF) was £58,209.00. We can rely on about £36,000.00, which is made up of standing orders, Gift Aid envelopes in the plate, Gift Aid and the kindergarten rent. We cannot predict the non-envelope aspect of the offertory collection which has varied, nor can we predict the level of donations, the stipends (Mass offerings) nor stole fees (baptisms, weddings and funerals). Some people still either forget to make offerings or make remarkably low ones and we are falling well short of other parishes in this aspect (please see guidelines in the church porch).

We really need to try and at least match our income and expenditure, ideally creating a surplus for future expenditure. We have a small amount of reserves but these have to be dipped into when our books don't balance and we should aim to replenish these. We are blessed with the generosity of 40% of parishioners who made Together in Faith pledges but we should only use this money for capital replacement (carpets, chairs, heating etc.).

In terms of expenditure we have very little scope for reducing this other than in the area of energy. Remarkably, despite the fact that we are by no means the biggest church in the diocese, and we are a relatively modern church, last year our energy consumption was the third highest in the diocese, we need to address a cultural issue that we seem to expect our church to be the same temperature as our homes, which is just not practical and increasingly more expensive.

So, we need to look at the income side of the equation and once again appeal to the generosity of our parishioners.

We either need more people to start giving or those who give, to give more. The deficit could be plugged if 82 of the 312 people who attend Mass all gave £1 per week more (this could be 60 people at £1.00 if they were to use Gift Aid).

Planned Giving – Gift Aid – John Fletcher

A successful campaign was carried out in March 2013 to encourage more parishioners to consider making their offerings to the parish by standing order.

This year the parish will be able to take advantage of the Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme (GASDS) which will allow us to claim a tax rebate on non-Gift Aided offerings. This should result in an increase of £1,250.00 each year to our funds. It is anticipated that the total Gift Aid tax rebate to the parish this year will be approx. £8,500.00.

Safeguarding Update 2013 – John Flanagan

Safeguarding is about creating a safe environment for all members of our parish. It is about assessing risks when activities take place, and ensuring that all people in charge of children have undertaken appropriate police clearance. All of this is a clear statement of the value that we place on the individual.

The most obvious way that this is carried out in the parish is through people being cleared by the DBS (the Disclosure and Barring Service). Almost a quarter of the adults in the parish have been cleared because of the work they undertake, which is a wonderful reflection of the level of commitment in the parish.

2013 has seen many changes in the way in which clearance is carried out. Gone is CRB, and in is DBS with new forms and procedures. This has meant that the diocese has stopped rechecks of

people with CRB forms and only now are we able to restart this process, though we are as up-to-date in this area as possible.

Meetings with parish leaders and the parish safeguarding representative are planned for the coming year.

Social – Martin Brennan

The social gatherings after the 9.00 am and 11.00 am Masses have continued to be very popular.

We joined parishioners from the other Deanery parishes in the series of five cross-country walks from Gamlingay to Dunstable (via Biggleswade, Shefford and Flitwick).

The recent men’s breakfast, planned during the year and has now successfully started is hoped to continue; additionally a parish dinner is due to be organised this year. Other events that are in the ideas stage at the moment are Seder meal in March, summer BBQ, parish walk and pub lunch, Flitwick singers and wine tasting, as is the opportunity to have fundraising events.

Communication - Maggie Dullaghan

In October 2013 we launched a Facebook page, which is managed by Deacon Philip, Maggie Dullaghan and Tony Davis.

Social networks are a crucial part of society today, with Facebook being the most popular, which has over 1 billion people on it. We wanted to have a presence on Facebook, which gives us a powerful tool for communication to evangelise and engage with those inside and outside of our parish.

The vision for our Facebook page is that it is faith building; therefore the content is based on scripture, Vatican news, Pope Francis, parish life, events and news items to pray for. We have posted photos of events, such as the Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Advent service and the recent men’s breakfast.

We currently have 56 likes, and some posts have been seen by over 110 people.

Summary

In closing, whilst this is a report from the PMG, I would like to thank all those who have supported the parish in whatever way. Much work is undertaken that is not specifically reported in in this report, however they are all acknowledged and I thank them for the work that they undertake, asking that they continue, thus allowing the parish to flourish.

Chris McMellon - Chair of the Parish Management Group - March 2014

Parish Statistics for 2013

Average Mass attendance	295	Confirmation candidates		Marriages	3
Baptisms	26	First-Communion candidates	15	Deaths	7
Adults received	2				