

Sacred Heart Catholic Church Pope Close, Flitwick



Parish Management Group (PMG) Annual Report for 2014

During the last twelve months much activity has taken place in the Parish Management Group. In order to reflect this in summary format, we have reports from the committee members of the relevant areas. I am standing down this year and thank everyone for their support.

Christopher McMellon

Looking to the Future – Deacon Philip Pugh

In March 2014 we heard a talk prepared by a sub-group of the PMG, which explained the background to Bishop Peter's announcements in late 2013 about the future shape and structure of the diocese. He explained how the active number of priests serving the diocese would fall dramatically in the years ahead. The PMG felt that it was important to outline to the parish the implications for the local area, and the way the Pastoral Area Council (PAC) has been reflecting and planning on this issue throughout the life of Bishop Peter's Walking Humbly programme.

People heard how the three parishes in Flitwick, Shefford and Biggleswade would in time be served by only two priests, and eventually only one priest. The potential of these changes were touched on. Several evening consultations were held following the presentations at Sunday Masses. Though only a few people attended these opportunities, through them and other feedback, ideas were brought together for three areas of action to begin to prepare for this uncertain future. Feedback on these ideas was postponed while Fr. Denis was unwell; a summary is being shared with this report.

Faith Development and Spirituality – Deacon Philip Pugh

As ever the calendar was packed with events to help to develop the life and work of the parish! New events in the programme kicked off in January with a Men's Breakfast and a parish Quiet Day. The morning for the menfolk of the parish was well supported and repeated by popular demand in July. The Quiet Day was to replace the winter date for the parish retreat; it was equally well attended and the feedback for the opportunity to prayer, reflect and meditate was very positive.

The Charismatic Prayer group followed up on their Life in the Spirit seminars from 2013 with a programme called Just 10, which explored the Ten Commandments.

Bishop Peter's visit for the confirmation in July included welcoming twelve candidates from the parish and eight young people from Shefford, who received the sacrament of confirmation on the night. It was a truly joyful evening.

The late summer saw us revisit Buckden Towers for the parish retreat. The day focused on the words of St Paul that 'we are earthenware vessels' that bear the treasures of the Spirit. To help to bring to life the many passages in scripture which refer to the image of clay and the potter's hands, we were joined by Eve Carroll, a potter, who demonstrated the art of throwing the clay!

Advent saw us feature a time of reflection centred on Pope Francis's ground breaking letter 'The Joy of the Gospels'. Four evening presentations broke open the meaning of the Pope's words and allowed for a deep and meaningful reflection on his call for the Church to evangelise more effectively.

Catechism – Helen Burgess

Our parish has continued to support a range of catechesis for our children and young people throughout 2014. We had a visit from Bishop Peter in July when 12 of our young people received the sacrament of Confirmation. This was a very special occasion for the young people. Other groups have continued to thrive and have welcomed new volunteers (we always need more!). Thank you to all our parents and Catechists for the support you give with the range of programmes we offer. We look forward to the year ahead.

Here are some thoughts from our Catechists:

Children's Liturgy

The group grows and its strength is down to the whole team. The variety and different styles explaining the Gospel helps to keep the children engaged

Pre-Communion

Twenty-seven children successfully complete the Pre-communion programme. From autumn 2014 we have started with nine children who have become regular and enthusiastic attendees. The children have proudly displayed some of their work at the back of the church!

Communion

Twenty-one children received their first holy communion in 2014. Children prepared for and received the sacraments with their parent's support. The parents themselves got a fresh insight into the beauty of reconciliation and communion.

We have made changes to First Holy Communion preparation. Our children now prepare over two years with the sacrament of Reconciliation at the end of year one. Initial feedback is that the children are receiving deeper preparation.

Post-Communion and beyond

This group supports our children in their understanding of their faith, between the formal programmes of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. We follow the liturgical year, giving the children insights into key events during the year. This year a number of the group participated in a role play at the Advent service. We support them to prepare for the sacrament of Reconciliation at Christmas and Easter.

Health and Safety – John Fletcher

The annual safety inspection and risk assessment review of the church and grounds was carried out in January and did not identify any significant new safety risks. The minor issues identified have been addressed. A diocesan audit of our health and safety arrangements

carried out in 2013 included a recommendation that a formal monthly check of higher risk items should be introduced.

Subsequently a check procedure was prepared and introduced in April 2014, and has in general been useful in ensuring that minor risks are reviewed and action taken at the time or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

Planned Giving and Gift Aid – John Fletcher

The campaign started in March 2013 to encourage more parishioners to consider making their offerings to the parish by regular standing order has continued this year. (Results below.)

	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Offertory envelopes used	75	84	81
Gift Aid declarations	99	94	80
Standing orders	53	49	37

This year the parish will again 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 up to a maximum of £5,000.00.

This should result in an additional £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 approximately £9,750.00.

Safeguarding – John Flanagan

This year, the new Disclosure and Barring Process has become embedded allowing the parish to conduct a full updating and recheck of people in the parish. There are currently seventy-nine people in the parish who have been checked to work with either children or adults with additional needs or both. This is a very positive reflection on the level of commitment within the parish. We are now in a position where everyone working in this way will be rechecked every three years. However the rechecks took a very long time with people needing to be chased.

People continue to display a good awareness of the need to create safe environments in which activities can take place, a vital part of safeguarding work.

I am standing down as parish safeguarding representative and would like to thank all of you who have put up so patiently with the system that we have to use.

Social Activities – Martin Brennan

During the year the parish enjoyed several social events, which proved popular and were well attended. These included the renewed series of men's breakfasts held on occasional Saturday mornings, the general socials after the 9.00 am and 11.00 am Masses every Sunday, the family barbeque held in the garden in the late summer and the parish dinner held at a local hostelry in October. In December the Flitwick Singers performed a carol concert in aid of a child bereavement charity. There was also a parish raffle.

Social Media – Maggie Dullaghan

We have an established Facebook page, which is a great tool for communicating with members of the parish and those outside of the parish. We post information on what is happening in the parish, Scriptures, news on Pope Francis, charity information, inspirational

posts, YouTube clips and posts on events that have happened in the parish.

We currently have 77 likes, which are a mixture of people both inside and outside of the parish. People who do not have a Facebook account are also looking at our Facebook page (it is not necessary to have an account to view our page).

Our weekly reach to people can range from 72–303, with 28–55 engaging (which means that they have liked or commented on our posts).

We will be incorporating more posts this year from our weekly bulletin.

Sacred Heart Financial Review 2014 – Hugh Davies

This commentary is designed to be read with the annual statement of accounts.

Concerted efforts have been made this year to reduce costs. All the figures shown in italics on the expenditure column are lower than last year.

We have carried out a number of items of building work this year: re-carpeting the sacristy; new wardrobe in the sacristy; worktop in the office; external joinery repairs; the most extensive tree felling that we have done for ten years which included the conifer trees at the back of church.

We have also installed a new sound system and new boiler in the presbytery – both funded by our TiF parish funds. We had planned to replace the church heating system but have had difficulty finding heaters that will fit the existing recesses. We are hoping to carry this out in the summer. We will also need to re-stain the doors and windows to the presbytery.

During Fr. Denis's illness we have had to pay for supply priests but we were able to reclaim these costs from a diocesan insurance policy.

Although the overall income has reduced that is mainly due to the fact that we drew down less money from our TiF account with the diocese. Offertory collection had been steadily declining until Fr. Denis made his appeal which has resulted in an extra £1820 over the ten weeks since he made his appeal. This is very encouraging we hope it will continue.

We are also pleased that the number of people who donate through standing orders and Gift Aid has increased, which has increased our tax refund.

The combination of reduced costs and increased income means that should these continue we will have a weekly surplus of £35.00. However as the kindergarten is closing we will only have rent for half a year in 2015 which equates to £38.00 per week. Therefore, we will be in deficit by £3.00 per week this year and £76.00 per week in 2016, when we will get no income from the kindergarten.

We therefore need to continue to save costs wherever we can and maximise income wherever we can.

Parish Statistics 2014

Average Mass attendance	287	Confirmation Candidates	12	Marriages	0
Baptisms	12	First Communion Candidates	21	Deaths	11
Adults received	2				