

# About our Parish ...

## Sacred Heart Catholic Church



### Catholic Parish of The Sacred Heart

#### Our Mission

Through the power of the Holy Spirit we will be a parish renewed in our knowledge and understanding of the love of Jesus Christ, to enable each of us to fulfil our Christian mission.

Pope Close, Flitwick, MK45 1JP

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## OUR PARISH PROFILE IN EIGHT NUMBERS

**457**

the number of people recorded in our 2016 parish census cards.

**187**

households who make up the parish community.

**17**

towns and villages where our parishioners call home, reaching from Marston in the west, to Silsoe in the east, and Westoning in the south, to Houghton Conquest in the north.

**56%**

the proportion of households which are families with one or more children living at home, which means 4 out of every 10 homes are made up of couples and single people.

**1/4**

of all our people who are children under the age of 18 – and that number is growing as local housing developments increase

**83**

a quarter of all adults in the parish have safeguarding clearances, to be able to work with children for catechesis and adults for home visiting and Holy Communion.

**65**

Baptisms, First Holy Communions, First Confessions, Marriages, and Funerals were celebrated in 2015 – all made possible through the work of 20 catechists.

**2**

Towns: Flitwick with 36% of parishioners and Amphill with 26% make up by far the biggest part of the parish community.

(All numbers taken from 2016 census)

## CARING PARISH

During the last twelve months, the Parish Pastoral Council has been looking at how we ensure that everyone in our parish receives the care they need. The need to know people by name is vital. Work has begun in this area and how we welcome people to Mass and into the parish, forms part of this work.

Other areas include:

- Providing effective communication for people in need of visits and for receiving Holy Communion at home
- Support for the bereaved
- Opportunities for those in need to pray

And more will follow. We are all part of this process.

## COMMUNICATION

Communicating with each other in the parish and with others beyond our parish is important. In addition to our weekly bulletins handed out at weekend Masses, the website ([www.sacredheartflitwick.co.uk](http://www.sacredheartflitwick.co.uk)) has a great deal more information. We have an active Facebook page with followers from the parish and further afield.

On a more personal level we have **welcomers** at our weekend Masses who may be the first parishioners you speak to, but we trust not the last!

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

**We encourage all parents to bring their children to church**

**Baptismal Preparation** When seeking baptism for their child we invite parents and Godparents if possible to attend a short preparation course, held regularly throughout the year. Parents are invited to bring their child to one of our weekend Masses for the Rite of Welcome, to allow the whole parish to welcome the infant and rejoice that he or she is joining our community of faith.

**Little 'Uns** For pre-school children, meets weekly on Friday mornings. It provides an opportunity to develop faith through play and song as well as a social gathering for the children's day time carers.

**Children's Liturgy** For children age 3+, an opportunity to follow their own liturgy based on the theme of the day's Gospel available at all weekend Masses.

**Catechetical Programme** We have a comprehensive, integrated programme starting when children reach school age. We then run a two-year programme leading to First Communion with the sacrament of Reconciliation being celebrated in the first year. Sessions are then available for children after First Communion until they are ready to join our confirmation programme.

**Altar Servers** After First Communion we welcome any young people who wish to serve at Mass. New servers are always welcome – training will be given.

## CONFIRMATION AND WELCOMING ADULTS INTO THE CHURCH

**Confirmation** The Sacrament of Confirmation is held every two years. On 14 July 2016 eighteen of our young people and three adults will be confirmed by Bishop Peter.

**Rite of Catholic initiation for Adults (RCIA)** We are always ready to support adults who wish to explore a calling to join us in full communion.

## FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Events and programmes are run regularly to provide opportunities for formation ranging for Lenten and Advent courses, exploration of the Gospels and other bible subjects and other topics of interest. This Lent we are also participating in an ecumenical programme with local churches.

## LITURGICAL INVOLVEMENT

We have a team of Extraordinary Ministers of Word and Communion who support the clergy in the distribution of the Blessed Sacrament, take communion to the sick and housebound and take Services of Word and Communion when required.

Masses are also enriched by our team of readers. At weekend Masses they also call the congregation to prayer as well as deliver the Word to us all.

## PRAYER AND PRAYER GROUPS

Our programme for **spiritual renewal** includes our annual Quiet Day, Retreat, Men's Breakfast meetings as well as a pilgrimage programme. In many of these activities we are joined by people from other parishes and other faiths. There are also opportunities for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction.

**Mother's Prayers Group** A well-established group that meets fortnightly in the intimacy of a parishioner's home for prayer and fellowship. They pray for their children, grandchildren and anyone who has asked for prayers or who is our heart.

**Charismatic Prayer Group** This group meets for a time of informal praise and worship, intercession and prayer ministry.

## SOCIAL

Tea and coffee after 11.00 am Mass on Sundays is an opportunity for social interaction in a relaxed atmosphere. Our Sewing Group meets regularly, and there are an annual Macmillan coffee mornings, Soup for Sudan lunches during Lent and other social events such as a parish dinner or barbeque.

## SVP – SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Our SVP conference continues to work visiting those in need, offering help and support. Its work is part of the Caring Parish Plan. New members are always welcome and an appeal for new members will be made in April. Members organise a Mass for the sick of the parish annually in June, followed by afternoon tea. There is the annual Giving Tree in Advent but the core work of visiting goes on week in, week out. Anyone in need can contact the SVP on 01525 406 810.

## PPC CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – 2016

As we reflect on 2015, the words of the parish prayer *in these times of challenge and change*, seem to aptly sum up the year. Following last year's AGM, when I briefed you on Bishop Peter's pastoral vision as part of the Walking Humbly initiative for the pastoral area, to ensure that parishes could be served with the predicted reduction in the number of priests available, this seemed to be a distant reality, as we did not know what would happen to Fr. Denis at that time.

We experienced the initial sadness when Fr. Denis made the decision to retire as our parish priest, but all understood his decision after such a long illness, and were reassured to think he would still be with us in the priest's house. However, the Lord had other plans and he was taken to his final resting place a few weeks later. With the support of a number of key friends he was able to be in his parish as was his wish. The impact that Fr. Denis made to our parish was immense and our Facebook page has never seen so much activity, with people from far and wide paying their respects. After this sombre time there were times when we all struggled to look forward, but with the support of the whole parish working together we have continued to flourish and grow.

Canon Bennie accepted the big challenge of running the two parishes of Sacred Heart Flitwick and St Francis Shefford. We welcomed his arrival and accepted Bishop Peter's guidance to support our priests and that the number of masses needed to be reduced. We hope Cannon Bennie will be granted continued energy and zeal which he has delivered in abundance to us over the last year.

When I accepted the role of chair of the Pastoral Parish Council I admit I had a very naive understanding of the work required, and the number of people involved in making the Parish run so well. It is a tribute to all involved that we have worked together to make our parish welcoming and energetic.

The support of Deacon Philip through this year has been immense and we owe him a huge amount of gratitude for his devotion and care of the parish, as he helped guide us through these changes. We are also grateful for his commitment to take on the role of parish administrator in addition to his deaconate role.

We started the year outlining the three central themes of community, formation and resources to focus our work in the parish. The key work and progress on these areas is featured in this update. Some highlights include the parish barbeque which was blessed with good weather and a great attendance, and celebrated the opening of the St Francis Suite. The adaption of the catechises programme has been hugely supported by the catechists and parents to respond to the challenges of our Mass – times changes, and to bring more of the formation activity to be as part of the parish family. An update on the parish finances is also attached.

As we look forward to the year ahead, I urge you all to find a way of supporting the work of the parish to allow us to grow sustainably.

*Siobhan Campbell*