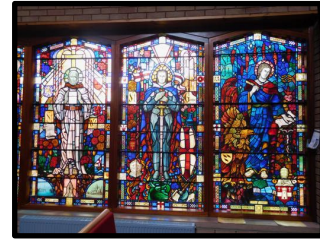


Sacred Heart Church Flitwick



Parish Pastoral Council Annual Report for 2020 8 July 2021

FR. JERRY MANOMEY, PRIEST IN CHARGE

In the 2020 parish pastoral report, Fr. John indicated that during the Coronavirus pandemic, the parish has become a source of great comfort and hope to the community. As your new pastor, I am also encouraged by the words of Pope Francis that, 'the parish should not be defined solely by territorial borders and incapable of engaging the faithful in a wide range of initiatives, especially the young, for this would imprison the parish in unacceptable stagnation and in worryingly repetitive pastoral cycles' (Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment, §129). As we engage in a missionary conversation between culture and the Word of God, I acknowledge the support of everyone in the continuous growth of the parish.

ROGER WILSHAW, PPC CHAIR

When I wrote my report last year, I reflected on a year of reaching out to support others – raising funds for charity and dropping over 1,000 leaflets to new homes in the parish. Back then the pandemic was getting into full swing, and I remember saying that I wasn't confident in my ability to foresee the year ahead. But I was confident in our collective ability to continue to use our talents and commitment to thrive and grow. And both of those statements have proved to be true. The pandemic has been a longer, harder road than we had hoped. Yet despite many hardships and suffering we have not only survived, but we have also thrived, and that is down to the love and support that each one of us gives to and receives from our community.

As this report shows, a lot has been achieved this year, led by so many dedicated volunteers. On behalf of all of us in the parish, I want to record our thanks to all of you who have kept the church open, welcoming and safe, and the parish thriving and supportive during one of the most challenging times we have ever faced. You have given us new ways to join together in prayer, you have given us love, hope, support and insight and we are very, very grateful. Particular thanks to the SVP who have supported so many – and made over 1,000 phone calls to offer support.

We must acknowledge the high number of parishioners we have lost in the past year. It has been heart breaking to be unable to hold the types of funeral they and their families would have wanted. The pandemic has robbed us all of so much but to those who have mourned loved ones it seems particularly cruel. In November we dedicated a Mass to each parishioner who had died in 2020. We also held services at both Ampthill and Flitwick cemeteries to remember those who had died in the last twelve months.

A few months ago, when we started to see the light at the end of the Covid tunnel we began a series of conversations about how we transition to a new normal, post-Covid. Under the heading 'Rethink; Re-emerge; Renew' we set out to answer three questions: first what did we do well and less well to support one another during Covid?; second, what type of parish community do we want to be?; and third, what should we do differently? We will soon be saying a bit more about what we concluded, and seeking your views on what we plan to focus on – through the PPC – in the coming year. So watch this space!

In recent weeks we have also welcomed Fr. Jerry. I know the hurt that was felt when Flitwick lost a dedicated parish priest and consequently had fewer Masses. I don't know about you, but I thought we would never have a resident priest here in Flitwick again. So, the news that Fr. Jerry was joining us was met with particular joy. Our community, that is so welcoming to everybody has

stretched out their arms to welcome Fr. Jerry, and I know we all feel so blessed, grateful, and energised to have him with us.

Of course, Fr. Jerry's arrival necessitated Fr. John's departure. As I said at Fr. John's last Mass with us, we feel privileged to have got to know him and to have joined him to celebrate hundreds of masses. And we are so grateful for the way Fr. John helped us to deepen our faith and strengthen our community. I hope he's getting a well-earned rest.

Finally, let me thank two people without whom we just could not have survived, let alone thrived, over the past year: Deacon Philip and our parish pastoral administrator, Suzanne. Their level of commitment, their energy, their towering and ceaseless ambition are gifts which we should celebrate every day. Thank you both, for all you do for all of us.

I pray that the coming year will see a return to normal: the church full at Christmas; children progressing through formation; tea and coffee after Mass; throwing our doors open without booking; following arrows on the floor; and maybe even the odd hug. Until then let's keep doing what we do so well, supporting one another in a loving, committed Christian community.

What we achieved in 2020



FAMILY PRAYERS HELEN BURGESS

During Lent this year we invited our families to gather via zoom for family prayers. Every Sunday afternoon at 3.00 pm we gathered for a very simple time of prayer and reflection. Each week the children produced prayers, pictures shared and read. This event was well supported and a real parish bonding experience. We have continued to meet once a month and hope our last one in July might be a socially distanced picnic with prayers!

NAVIGATING COVID WITH THE SPIRIT DEACON PHILIP PUGH

Just as the Covid lockdown arrived we were close to finishing the Big Picture programme, a weekly reflection on the Bible and its role in our lives. Though we initially had to pause the last few events, we brought the whole thing to a close with a Zoom gathering of ALL the people who had taken part.

The wonders of online communication enabled us to immediately react to the closure of the church and the loss of Mass by starting to share the Morning Prayer of the Church three times a week – at our regular Mass times. Participation was very strong; one Sunday morning we had 40 screens live on Zoom, with up to 100 people taking part.

Fr. John began offering one of his own private Masses at Flitwick which, with the very professional skills of Tony Davis we started to stream via You Tube, creating an online community of our parishioners sharing the Mass, even if remotely. Our initial, practical experience led to the installation of a more permanent camera and audio system to facilitate the streamed Masses. This has been maintained right up to this month.

Once we were permitted to have private prayer in the church, we gathered a very dedicated, supportive group of more than 20 stewards. They helped marshal and clean the church, first for prayer then Masses once they restarted and the other devotional and prayer events we were able to stage.

Though the annual Quiet Day and autumn retreat were cancelled we had a wide range of other spiritual activities continuing across the parish. They were the Call & Care initiative; weekly ebulletins to the whole parish; the prayer group's prayer course and online meetings; Mother's prayer group online; the Advent conversation focusing on the Catechism of the Church; Zoom baptism preparation sessions; family prayers; Exposition; World Day of Prayer event; the Carol Concert and so much more!

The Spirit guided and filled our life to support us through the pandemic as a community. God be praised!

PLANNED-GIVING AND GIFT AID 2020/2021

JOHN FLETCHER

The offerings made by planned-giving envelopes and loose plate have been substantially affected by the Covid-19 lockdowns and subsequent capacity restrictions within the church.

The positive news is that the trend of parishioners now making their offerings by standing order has increased (results below). The average offerings equate to approximately £750 per week and should ensure that the parish will have a steady income until the church resumes normal Masses.

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Offeratory Envelopes Used						
75	70	62	56	45	35	17
Gift Aid Declarations						
99	105	101	98	99	90	87
Standing Orders						
53	69	72	76	78	84	86

The Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme (GASDS) would normally allow us to claim a tax rebate of £2,000 on non-gift-aided offerings up to a maximum of £8,000. However, with a reduction in offertory collections made by cash, and non-gift-aided offertory envelopes we were able to claim a refund of only £764.

More
that we
achieved
in
2020

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN AMPHILL AND FLITWICK

HELEN BURGESS

Churches Together Ampthill and Flitwick have been relatively quiet during the churches are busy looking after their own congregations in these strange times. However, in January we had a wonderful well-attended gathering on Zoom which I was able to organise to celebrate the week of prayer for Christian unity. We look forward to this group restarting post-pandemic with the support of our ministers. We are also need to appoint a new secretary and chairperson.



SVP REPORT MAY 2020 TO JUNE 2021

JOHN FLANAGAN

Turning Concern into Action

The last twelve months have continued to be a challenging time for us all. For the conference of the parish SVP, of which there are currently twelve active members, it has been a time of keeping going, and doing things in a different way. Members have kept in touch with those in need and over a thousand phone calls have been made. Shopping has been done and has been left at front doors or delivered through windows (downstairs only). People have still been helped with transport, but with everyone wearing masks and windows being open even on very cold days.



Funds have been raised for people in need with the appeals in Advent for the Homeless and Walking for Sudan in May, both being generously supported as was the conference appeal in September. We continue to support three communities in rural India and two students, again in India. At home, we have donated funds to the Need project and members have provided meals and basic survival kits to the homeless.

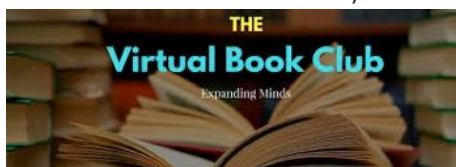
And much of this has been done because you support the SVP so well and generously.

Thank you.

BOOK CLUB

The book club continued in 2020 even during lockdown as we met on Zoom, and we read:

- 📖 *The Long Road to Heaven* by Tim Heaton, for Lent
- 📖 *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat* by John Ortberg.
- 📖 *Eucharist* by Bishop Robert Barron.
- 📖 *Ten Women of the Bible* by Max Lucado.



LIVESIMPLY – CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

JIM AYLWARD

In February 2020 we launched our campaign to achieve the CAFOD *livesimply* award for the parish. This involves undertaking to live simply, live sustainably with creation, and live in solidarity with those living in poverty. As with so many other things, the pandemic has affected our progress, but we are now officially registered to pursue our aims, and you can see the certificate of registration on display in the church.



Part of our goal of living sustainably with creation, has been to consider the environment of the grounds around the church, and to support nature and wildlife. We now have ten bird-nesting boxes and two bat-boxes in place, and an insect hotel. We have also planted several hundred spring bulbs, as well as continuing to care for the flower beds and lawns. There is now an impressive stone Sacred Heart Cross in the flower bed to the right of the entrance to the church. We have sown seeds for a small wildflower meadow at the back of the lawn area, through the gate at the side of the church. We are looking into establishing a small scrape pond, boggy area, perhaps even incorporating a solar-powered water fountain.

So, in spite of the restrictions of the past year, we continue to be inspired by the words of Pope Francis. He challenges us to get to grips with the problems we all face because of climate change and the threats to the environment: 'the world is a gift which we have all freely received and must share with others'.

CHARISMATIC GROUP

NICKY PATERSON AND DEBBIE LEWIS

The charismatic prayer group has a core of seven people. Due to the pandemic and following prayer, it was decided we wanted to reach out to people of the parish. The Come and See Zoom group was created, initially, every Wednesday evening to follow a video session called P.R.A.Y. It followed an agenda of: welcome; worship song; the video; breakout discussion groups of about six people; worship song; collective prayer and Aaron's Blessing. There were at times over thirty people attending and regularly over twenty.

As this format seemed to be enjoyed by all, we continued with Come and See Some More using the CELEBRATE back to basics resources for five weeks.

Following Easter, each week one of the core group took the Sunday Gospel and shared some reflection and personal testimony – these were attended by over twenty people and seems to be a regular group of people. All attending wanted to continue meeting, so after a wonderful evening with Fr. Jerry sharing his thoughts on Encounter, we are currently using a CaFÉ resource, looking at the book of Revelations by watching a video about St John's time in Patmos.

We are now going to Zoom every other Wednesday evening and hope to start meeting in person at the church soon, restrictions allowing. We plan to run the Life in the Spirit course in September which Fr. Jerry is very passionate about. We hope to reach many in the parish with this.

BAPTISMS,

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION, CONFIRMATION AND RCIA

We had eleven baptisms, eleven candidates for first Holy Communion, one confirmation and one person received into the Church in 2020.

WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

There were no weddings in 2020 due to the pandemic.

We had 17 funerals which were restricted to the number allowed by the regulations of the day.

On All Souls Day, we held services to remember those who had died in the last twelve months at Ampthill and Flitwick cemeteries. These were held by Deacon Philip and Suzanne with no one attending.

MOTHERS' PRAYERS

SUE BARLEY



Our nine members have continued to meet regularly by Zoom since the beginning of the pandemic. We begin with a worship song and then we each pray for our families, our children and for anyone who is in need of prayer. We thank the Lord for the blessings we have received during this difficult time.

In September we will celebrate twenty years of Mother's Prayers at Sacred Heart. Alleluia!

SOCIAL MEDIA



Over the last twelve months, we have had an increased presence on social media. Many of our events have been widely liked and commented on.

Due to the pandemic and when the church was closed, we live-stream Mass and other activities. Mass is still live-streamed so those who are not able to attend Mass can participate in the sacrament with the rest of the parish.

