

Sacred Heart Church Flitwick



Parish Pastoral Council Annual Report for 2021 21 July 2022

FR. JERRY MANOMEY, PRIEST IN CHARGE

We believe in the mission of Jesus Christ that he shares with his Church. This report is rightly focused on the activities of the parish, especially after my one year as parish priest. As we come out of the pandemic of Covid-19, we reflect on the activities of the past liturgical year. I reflect on what has gone well and what we can learn as we journey towards the future.

It seems the impact of the coronavirus seems to be less on our community so far as worship is concerned. The year under review was quite busy with the preparation and celebration of sacraments and the launching of the 40th anniversary of the parish.

The preparation and the celebration of the first holy communion for the children begin with registration and the interview of the children and parents. The efficient catechists journeyed with these children through various courses, enabling them to become confident about the teachings of the Catholic faith. The period of preparation ended with the joyful celebration of the special Eucharistic Mass. The parish was also blessed with the celebration of the Confirmation Mass by Bishop David after his first visit on the parish feast day.

During my one-year pastoral stewardship in Sacred Heart, I wish to thank everyone, of course, the team of catechists and those involved in the administration of the sacraments. I also appreciate the efforts of Hugh Davies, parish finance officer, and Suzanne our parish secretary for their assistance and love as we continue our faith journey in the community of Flitwick and Ampthill for the last 39 years.

As the world comes out of the stress of the pandemic, the war between Russia and Ukraine seems to distract our attention from the beautiful world around us. This and other related issues remind us of the core mandate of every established parish. For our young people, we are to be a community of faith providing meaning and goals in life. Ultimately, we are to provide strength, light, and consolation born of friendship with the sacred heart of Jesus Christ.

ROGER WILSHAW, PPC CHAIR

As we reach the end of another year dominated by Covid restrictions, we reflect on the challenges we have faced individually and collectively and the hardships and loss we have all endured. There is no doubt this past year was easier and a bit more normal than the one before, but it was still heart-wrenching as we said goodbye to cherished friends and parishioners.

This was our first year with a resident priest. We are so blessed to have Fr. Jerry with us and so grateful for his love and support. So many in our parish have supported Fr. Jerry to keep the church open and safe during the various restrictions we have faced. On all our behalf, I want to express our deep gratitude for everything our wonderful volunteers have accomplished.

There is one special person who deserves our particular thanks and that is Deacon Philip Pugh. Deacon Philip joined the diaconate 15 years ago and God sent him to Flitwick when we needed him most, to support and lead us through the difficult period of Canon Denis's illness and then the eight years when we had no resident priest. Deacon Philip did so much, often behind the scenes, to support us all, help us grow our faith and help our parish community to thrive. I have heard

so many stories of the love and support Deacon Philip offered fellow parishioners alongside his unrivalled organisational skills. Deacon Philip is sorely missed but I look back with great fondness on the celebration we had to mark his retirement – our first event post-Covid! And I know we all give thanks for the ten years we had together.

I also want to thank Suzanne Yates – our tireless Parish Secretary. It often seems to me that Suzanne is the cornerstone of our parish, holding just about everything together. This year after 15 years Suzanne has stood down as the secretary of the Parish Pastoral Committee. She leaves the role with our grateful thanks for all she has done to make sure the parish council is not a talking shop but gets things done. I am delighted that Siobhan Lees has stepped in to take over as secretary. We are very lucky to have her. Suzanne, of course, continues her vital work as parish secretary.

In January this year we played our part in a special synodal conversation in the Catholic Church across the world. A synod is a congress, usually convened to decide an issue of doctrine. In the past, synods involved only the Church hierarchy and clergy. This synod was different because it started with you and me – in our schools, colleges and parishes. Pope Francis called on us to pray; to gather, to listen to one another, and in that process, to build a more caring Church family. In Sacred Heart, we aimed to make sure everybody had a chance to speak and to reach those of us who might feel that they are on the margins of the Church.

We conducted focus groups and received many email and phone responses. You can read our response on the parish website. I am very grateful to Catherine Davis and Siobhan McGrath who led our focus groups and put together our response to the diocese. I was struck by the depth of faith among those who contributed to our discussions and the desire to play a part in preparing the Church to thrive in the years ahead. It reminded me just what a thoughtful, prayerful, open and supportive parish we are all blessed to be part of.

Last year I concluded my remarks by saying:

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; the ability to throw our doors open without booking and following arrows on the floor; and maybe even the odd hug.

Well, our prayers were answered and everything I dreamed of has come to pass! Thank you to Fr. Jerry and to everyone who has helped us get back

What
we
achieved
in 2021

SVP REPORT JOHN FLANAGAN



Any report from the SVP must begin with a huge thank you to the parish for all the support through giving and prayer and help that we receive. Our full report will be published as usual in September, so this is just a brief summary of our work.

We continue with our key work of reaching out to befriend people. Visiting people in their homes is easier at the moment, but people are still regularly contacted and supported by phone. Shopping and providing transport continues, as do donations of food.

We have made donations of money and of goods to recognised groups in Ukraine and we have supported needy people in the UK still suffering from the economic consequences of the Covid pandemic.

And of course, we must thank you for your support of our annual appeal last September, the Giving Tree appeal, our Soup for Sudan Lenten lunch, and it was great to see so many at the recent Mass for the Sick.

Thank you from us.

PLANNED-GIVING AND GIFT AID 2020/2021

JOHN FLETCHER

The ending of most Covid restrictions and the introduction of three Masses at weekends has provided a more predictable level of income generated from mass offerings and standing orders. An appeal made at all Masses earlier this year resulted in a welcome increase in both of these methods of donation, considering the present challenging economic times.

The offerings made by standing order at present equate to approximately £885 per week.

The total Gift Aid generated by all methods of offering is expected to raise approximately £11,500 for year 2021/22.

From the table below it can be seen that the use of offertory envelopes has fallen dramatically over a number of years, and this trend has continued into the present year (2022/23).

Consideration should therefore be given to whether this method of making offerings should be continued, when the cost of purchasing offertory boxes is taken into consideration.

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Offertory Envelopes in Use						
70	62	56	45	35	17	12
Gift Aid Declarations						
105	101	98	99	90	87	96
Standing Orders						
69	72	76	78	84	86	95

More
we
achieved
in
2021

BOOK CLUB ANN LEATHERLAND

Sacred Heart Book Club, the inspiration of a small group of ladies and Deacon Philip Pugh as its spiritual director, was started in 2013. The idea was that books of a spiritual and/or motivational nature, which could be fictional or based on real life experiences, would be selected for each member to read, the group then meeting together and discussing what had been read.

The meetings are held every 6 to 8 weeks which gives each member the time to acquire and read the selected book. Members volunteer to host the meeting and encourages informed discussion in a very social and friendly atmosphere, supported as ever by tea and cakes.

We read about 4 to 5 books a year. Texts are often chosen to reflect the life of the Church, for example, Advent and Easter, the emphasis on the Scriptures and readings for the season. Works and other Christian writers and theologians including Pope Francis.

The recent lockdowns meant that we continued our meetings via Zoom, still inspirational but foregoing the social aspect and refreshments. Thankfully we are now back to normal and continue to meet on a Thursday evening at 7.30 pm.



BAPTISMS,

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION, CONFIRMATION AND RCIA

We had twenty baptisms, fifteen candidates for First Holy Communion, sixteen confirmations and two people received into the Church the last twelve months

WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

There was one wedding in 2021 and we had 10 funerals.

In November 2021, we held a memorial service for the twenty-eight parishioners who had passed away during the pandemic.

On All Souls Day, we held services at Ampthill and Flitwick cemeteries to remember those who had died in the last twelve months.

LIVESIMPLY
CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

JIM AYLWARD

An important element of our support for CAFOD is the Lent Family Fast Day. This year, we were very grateful for the impressive presentation by the young people of the confirmation group after Masses.



Following the removal of the AstroTurf from the grounds at the back of the church, we have planted fruit trees, vegetables, and a wildflower area. The other grounds continue to be tended, and a solar-powered water feature has been installed.

A sponsored Walk for Water was organised in June to highlight the problems for safe water supply in the developing world. We were very pleased with the £2,000 plus raised for CAFOD.

We aim to revisit the pledges made before the pandemic regarding energy use and other measures in harmony with care for the environment.

And more

CHARISMATIC GROUP
DEBBIE LEWIS

During the pandemic, the group changed its name to Come and See based on John 4: 1-26, the encounter of the woman at the well with Jesus. The group wanted to say, 'Come and See, come and meet Jesus at the well'. We shared prayer, worship, teaching and breakout rooms with discussion. It felt intimate and was faith building.

As pandemic restrictions have eased, we have met online and in church, but since Easter we have paused meetings. We are gathering in the church on Wednesday 13 July for a time of prayer and discernment, to plan a way forward with the support and guidance of Fr. Jerry. We encourage all parishioners to come along to this, so that the group moves in the right direction for the good of all the Church.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN AMPHILL
AND FLITWICK

HELEN BURGESS AND DEBBIE LEWIS

Churches Together Ampthill and Flitwick have been able to regroup and reunite over the last year under the leadership of Marjorie Austin from Ampthill Baptist Church and administration support from our own Debbie Lewis.



Gathering over breakfast has been a great success organised throughout the year at different church venues. A simple breakfast is provided on a Saturday morning during which we meet and plan events.

The Walk of Witness returned on Good Friday 2022, a prayerfully led time of reflection that was well attended. We have gathered to pray for Christian Unity in January and during Christian Aid week, as well as hosting at Sacred Heart the Christian Aid Big Brekkie fundraiser. We are looking forward to more opportunities to gather, share and grow in our faith together in the year ahead. Plans are already in place to share discussion time in informal meetings in each other's churches modelling a Tea and Chat style. This will resume the model of receptive ecumenism discussions, listening in a synodal style to what we share in common, and respectfully learning about each other's traditions.

We also hope to repeat the retreat of 2019 at Turvey Monastery.

MOTHERS' PRAYERS
SUE BARLEY



Mothers' Prayers continued to meet and pray on Zoom up until last September, when we had the joy of meeting once more face to face. Our first meeting in the Canon Denis room was a celebration with tea and cake to celebrate twenty years of meeting together in our parish.

We now meet fortnightly after the 10.00 am Friday Mass, and we have grown to having 13 regular mothers attending.

We thank Our Lord for walking beside us all this time and answering so many of our prayers.