

The AGM report for 2023

This report is meant to review the activities of the new parish pastoral council, reflect on the present situation, and anticipate what the future opportunities and challenges are in the light of synodal conversation.

The parish has new members of the parish pastoral council. The spirituality of the parish pastoral council is inscribed in the constitutive reality of the Church, that is the body of Christ. The mission of the parish cannot be realised without an active pastoral council. The pastoral council is the foundation of a growing Christian community with chrism and ministries. In virtue of our baptism, Pope Francis reminds every member of the faithful that by the virtue of the baptismal priesthood, every member of the faithful is created for the building up of the whole body and at the same time, the whole people of God, to participate in the mission of the Church. The mission of Jesus Christ is still relevant in our changing society as we adjust to a new routine of parish life after the COVID-19 pandemic. People are responding differently to the Gospel of Christ and how we celebrate the sacraments. As we emerge out of the Covid pandemic, we thank God for the new group of pastoral council members, we reflect on their contributions, we also thank the previous members for their contributions to the parish as we journey towards the future with the support of the new chairperson Myriam and her team.

The pastoral council is a consultative body. Consultation is not a new word to us since we are used to asking doctors, dentists, and other professional persons for 'second opinions.' In the Church, though, it is a concept which has only recently appeared on the scene, and in this context, requires some attention. Consultation is the wisdom function in the Church. It is touching onto the Spirit within all of God's People and seeking to draw from that the wisdom of what is needed in the Church. But it is also reflective of the fact that we are not a democratic institution which is determined by vote of the majority. We are a Church which comes from Christ, which is commissioned by Christ to carry on a mission, and which is hierarchically constituted by Christ to assure that the mission gets done. We can't decide things by a totally democratic vote; nor can we decide things by a totally autocratic decision. We decide things together - -- by the working together of those with the executive function and those with the Spirit, and they express that through the consultative processes in the Church.

The 40th anniversary of the parish and its activities unified the parish again. I wish to thank the organisers of the anniversary. The Sacred Heart parish has experienced changes for the past 40 years of its existence in the Flitwick and Ampthill villages with different pastors.

The parish is blessed with volunteers involved in catechetical formation. The preparation and the celebration of the first holy communion for the children began 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 parish is blessed with young children and some young people. I would like to remind ourselves of the core mandate of caring for our children and the young people of this parish. Our parish community of faith must provide meaning and goals for them in life. I believe the parish is yet to recover fully from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on some members of the congregation. For instance, there are still parishioners who are struggling to share the sign of peace through the handshake during Mass. Some are yet to recognize new members and welcome the members of the parish.

During my pastoral stewardship, I wish to thank everyone, of course, the team of volunteers who clean the church, the catechists and those involved in the preparation of the sacraments. Liturgically, I wish to thank the music teams, the sacristans, the altar servers, the readers, the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, and the welcomers, and appreciate the efforts of the finance committee, Hugh Davies, Peter and other members. Administratively, I thank Suzanne our immediate past parish secretary for her assistance and welcome Aggie in her new role as parish secretary.

In conclusion, I hope and pray that with a new group of parish pastoral councillors, the parish will be renewed in our knowledge and understanding of the love of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, to enable each of us to fulfil our Christian mission.

Fr. Jerry Manomey