Sacred Heart Church Flitwick

Parish Pastoral Council Annual Report September 2025

Fr. Jerry Manomey – Priest in Charge

With gratitude to God, I present this annual report on the life of our parish community. The past year has been a time of both challenges and blessings, but through it all, our blessed Lord has been faithful, and your generosity and

commitment have been inspiring. This report seeks to assess the pastoral and spiritual life of the parish, individual ministries and the parish's relationship with other Christian communities, the stewardship and the finances of the parish and challenges and hope for the future.

The liturgical year began with the launch of the Jubilee Year, under the theme 'Pilgrim of Hope'. The jubilee Year was filled with hope and anticipation because of its various spiritual and physical benefits through the indulgences. This holy year reminds us of the fundamental values of the parish community as founded on the pillars of the Word of God, the sacraments and charity, which inspire a network of services, ministries and charisms designed to offer individuals opportunities to grow in their faith.

As a parish, we began the Jubilee Year by introducing the celebration of infant baptisms during the Sunday Eucharistic Masses. We encourage the parents of newly baptised members to feel a sense of belonging to the community. The celebration of infant baptism enabled the parish community to journey with various parents and also to sanctify the community with the renewal of baptismal grace. I wish to thank the organisers of the adult ongoing formation in the parish during the season of Lent for designing interesting topics for discussion. During the Easter vigil celebrations, the parish celebrated adult baptisms and the sacrament of confirmation, and some of them were sacramentally received into the church after a successful completion of the RCIA programme.

The parish had a successful celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus after a novena led by some parishioners. The first half of the year ended with a successful pilgrimage to the Walsingham Marian shrine.

As we continue our pilgrimage in this Jubilee year of hope, it is my heartfelt prayer that we will seek to obtain a plenary indulgence to cleanse our souls and help us grow closer to God.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the many volunteers in the parish who serve with love for God and their neighbours. We have dedicated volunteers who spend considerable time serving the church and fellow parishioners from the sanctuary to the main door as 'welcomers'. Specifically, we acknowledge the efforts of catechists involved in children's liturgy during Sunday Mass and those preparing children for First Holy Communion and the sacrament of confirmation. I am grateful for the support of those involved in the live streaming of the Saturday vigil Mass. It fulfils the evangelising drive of the parish.

In conclusion, I thank all of you for your dedication, prayers, and support. May we continue to grow as a family of faith, rooted in Christ and open to the Holy Spirit.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus inspire us in our various endeavours in the parish.

Myriam Rincon – Chair

In this report I intend to focus on some of our major achievements in the last twelve months.

After the successful fundraising for the new stations of the cross and their blessing on the feast of The Exaltation of the Holy Cross on 14 September, we then placed the small set in the parish room for quiet prayer. We were fortunate to have an anonymous donor offer to replace the tabernacle. After some discussion this was approved and it was blessed on 18 January. The plinth was extended to take the larger tabernacle and the area made to be the focus of the sanctuary. The old tabernacle that was designed for the church will now be used in Holy Week.

In the last year we have been celebrating the Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope. Sadly although this year was instigated by Pope Francis he was unable to see it to its conclusion, with his death on Easter Monday. With great joy we were blessed with a new Pope, Pope Leo XIV, who has continued on with this blessed year. As a parish we have joined the diocesan pilgrimage to Walsingham in June with 16 parishioners attending and Fr. Jerry concelebrating Mass in the basilica. We are taking a group to join the BPAC (Bedford Pastoral Area Council) on the pilgrimage to the Holy Door at St Joseph's church in Bedford.

Over the last year the diocese has introduced a new computer system called Casper. This is so all parishioner data is held safely and centrally. Although there have been some major headaches in its setting up, it is starting to show its potential. Many parishioners found it difficult to access and add their data but with the help of Aggie, our secretary, it has been achieved. In June it we decided that the weekly bulletin would be sent through Casper and although we were expecting a lot of trouble this did not arise. Parishioners are accessing the bulletin very well.

Our website had been of concern as it was bland. With help from Fr. Jerry's brother it has been revamped. This was not without a few problems but most of these now seem to be fixed.

We are very fortunate to have some wonderful volunteers helping at the church. I wish to particularly thank all our catechists. A lot of the work these people do is unnoticed by many. Apart from our catechises with the children and young people which will be elaborated in the report we have a number of other catechists who should be recognised. Anne Gadsden has been our RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) Leader for twelve years and has assisted a number of our parishioner to be welcomed into the Church. Anne has now decided it is time to pass this baton and so we thank her for her generosity and her time. We are also fortunate to have Catherine Davies who has organised our Advent and Lenten courses over the past few years. Suzanne Yates has taken on the organisation of The Quiet Day and the retreats since COVID and these have been well attended.

SVP Report – Alan Bevan

We presented our Annual Report to the Parish on 6 and 7 September and make our Appeal the following weekend – 13 and 14 September, so this is just a brief summary of our work this year.

We continue with our key work of reaching out to befriend people by visiting people in their homes and via the telephone. Shopping and providing transport continue as do donations of food.

We have spent over £600 in this country and sent over £,1300 abroad – to India and South Sudan.

While we have raised money through the coffee mornings at Flitwick Village Hall our main source of income remains the people of the parish who continue to be extremely generous. The annual appeal in September, the Advent Giving Tree and Soup for Sudan have been very well supported. The annual Mass for the Sick was a great success again with afternoon tea afterwards. We are very grateful for the support we receive from the parish, both financial, personal and through prayer.

Our conference membership currently stands at nineteen members, twelve active and seven inactive. Since last year, the Mini Vinnies (seven to eleven years) have become well established and now number fifteen.

Churches Together Ampthill and Flitwick – Debbie Lewis

We have five churches who are members: Ampthill Baptist, Greensand Community Methodist (Ampthill and Flitwick), SS Peter and Paul, St Andrew's and Sacred Heart.

We hold quarterly meetings hosted at rotating member churches. We begin with breakfast at 8.45 am and discuss, in a cafe style, local events we are organising/

involved with. The meetings finish by 10.00 am.

In the last year we have represented our Christian faith at Remembrance Day and civic services, and have organised the following events:

- Carol singing in the park
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- World Day of Prayer
- Good Friday Walk of Witness
- Easter Sunday sunrise service
- Ampthill Pride picnic

In planning, for next Lent we are hosting an ecumenical reconciliation service at Sacred Heart, more details to follow.

We have also raised money for Christian Aid by holding two coffee mornings at Flitwick Market and cooking a BIG BREKKIE at Sacred Heart, these are very popular events and raise approximately £1,000.00 per year.

Catecheses Reports – Kath Greenwood

Children's Liturgy

Children's Liturgy is well established during Sunday 11.00 am Mass. The average attendance is now fifteen children with ages range from three to ten years old.

Youth Hub

Monthly meetings have included a games night, designing a doorstop (Year of Hope activity designed by SVP), Life of Carlo Acutis, CAFOD Cancel Debt Choose Hope Awareness and creating a banner. Participants are available as readers at the family Mass on the first Sunday of the month along with younger members of the parish.

They also helped to lead the stations of the cross for young children on Holy Saturday.

Members have also been actively involved in the parish CAFOD appeals throughout the year.

Sacramental Preparation

This year we had fifteen children who made their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

We used a new resource 'We Prepare for Reconciliation' and 'We Share in the Eucharist'

This resource was chosen to support and encourage parents to be more active in their child's faith journey towards these two sacraments and beyond.

Mini Vinnies

The Parish now has an active SVP Mini Vinnies group of fifteen children, between seven and ten years old who meet twice a month.

Baptisms, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, RCIA and Funerals

We have had fifteen baptisms and fifteen children receive First Holy Communion in the last twelve months. There has been three people received into the Church, and we have had four adult First Holy Communion and four people have been confirmed.

There have been eleven funerals this year. In November we had a memorial Mass for all who had died in the last twelve months. This was very well attended. On All Souls Day we held services at Ampthill and Flitwick cemeteries.

Mothers' Prayers – Sue Barley

Mothers' Prayers has now been running for twenty-four years, and this year has seen an increase in our membership to 18. We meet every fortnight in the Canon Denis room after the 10.00 am Mass.
Mothers' Prayers has become a worldwide movement of the Holy Spirit and takes place in over one-hundred different countries with our little prayer book being translated into many different languages. As well as praying for our children and grandchildren, we pray for parish issues and general concerns on our heart. The Lord in his mercy has answered many of our prayers.

After meeting together for so many years we have grown close and are able to offer prayers and support for each other when needed. Fellowship is also important to us, and we enjoy going out together for a special lunch or afternoon tea on special occasions.

September saw us begin our twenty-fifth year of meetings, Praise God.

Sunday Teas – Rose Horne

After Sunday Mass, our friendly social Christian group gathers for tea/coffee, supporting each other in faith. Donations raised fund spiritual growth of parish children. We have also donated to Médecins Sans Frontières for their amazing work in Gaza. We source tea and coffee through Fairtrade, promoting ethical practices. Importantly, this group is a lifeline for some who are lonely – they really need to talk, enjoy themselves, and find company among friends. A warm, supportive community bonding over faith and friendship.

Health and Safety – Hugh Davies

No incidents or near misses have been reported and there have been no entries in the accident book in the last twelve months. Health and Safety checks are carried out monthly and reported to the diocese.

Property – Hugh Davies

Our buildings (church and presbytery) are now forty-three years old so we can expect to have some problems. We still have an occasional roof leak which is proving difficult locate but we will continue to investigate but other than that the property is in good condition.

We have now replaced all the presbytery windows with UPVC double-glazed units which will reduce energy costs and make it a more pleasant environment for Fr Jerry. We have fitted a Ring camera to the presbytery door to improve Fr Jerry's safety. An area that has been neglected for many years is the presbytery garden. Thanks to much hard work by Carmel and John Gallagher this area has now been transformed.

We replaced the boiler in the Canon Denis room so there is an on demand source of hot water at an acceptable pressure.

We have at last managed to get the cobwebs removed from high level in the church. This will now happen every twelve months.

There are no plans for anything other than minor repair works in the coming year.

Music and Liturgy – Hugh Davies

We now have six guitarists, an organist and a flautist plus a cantor at 11.00 am mass.

This is the highest number of musicians we have ever had and, the good news is, that two of them are teenagers. We now have music at all Masses and although there is a difference in style and repertoire in each of the Masses it gives each Mass its own 'musical' character and we are not seeking to change that.

Last year we introduced our supplementary hymn book which contains mainly contemporary music, and this is popular at all the Masses. We generally select well known music during the school holidays, but we will probably look at some new music in September.

Finance – Hugh Davies

A numerical report will be provided separately but it is worth noting that we recently made the decision to reduce the number of second collections taken with the historically smaller, and possibly less understood, collections being paid from parish funds.

We hope that by taking this decision we will attempt to reduce the 'giving fatigue' which is appearing across our own and other dioceses.

By reducing the number of second collections we hope that people will be more generous towards the collection causes with which they identify and the general parish collections.

This seems to be working as, over the eight weeks of July and August weeks on six weekends our average collection of £ 250.00 has increased to over £300.00.

Repository – Hugh Davies

This has now been taken over by Kath Greenwood and Una McAlinden since Marion Colleran is unwell. Sales have been reducing over the years, and we are left with unsaleable stock. It is early days, but Una and Kath are planning to rationalise the number and type of items held.

We generally make a modest profit on the items sold but we do not rely on this and run the repository as a service to the parish.

Cocaine Anonymous – Hugh Davies

We rent space in the Canon Denis room to this support group for a few years, now generally without problems. We recently had a complaint from a parishioner about the mess made by smokers. CA responded quickly and positively. We have also put a bigger 'butt collector' with signage outside.

In his homily on the Feast of St Maximilian Kolbe, Fr Jerry pointed out that he was the patron saint of drug addicts, so we have now an icon picture in the room. Who knows, it might help someone.

Food Bank Report – Ann and Peter Leatherland

We are pleased to report that our parishioners continue their regular support to the Parish Food Bank. Each week we store the donations in crates ready for the monthly collection by one of the charity's drivers. We regularly have five full crates.

The most popular items donated are dried goods, cereals, pasta, tins of vegetables, soups, ready-to-cook meals etc, as well as tea, coffee and sugar. As we have been reminded, many of the recipients who maybe living on very low incomes, or in temporary accommodation. have only simple methods of preparing and heating the food, such as a kettle or saucepan or microwave, then your donations are ideal.

Each time a collection is made, we are told just how much the Need project, the charity running this operation in and around Bedford, appreciate your support. Thank you for your continued support.