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Plus Other Features

Magazine Team

Margaret Rank Ann Wiseman

Tim Thorp Michael Townson

Susan van Ling Cathy Showell

whose views are not necessarily the same as those expressed in the magazine.

APM Parish Priest's Report 2023

It continues for me to be a great joy to work in the parish of St Joseph's, with the strength of the community spirit and the involvement of the people in the life of the parish. At this APM I thought I should put together a picture of what it takes to keep the life of the parish going.

Administration

Parish Administrator is a position vacant at the moment. Previously it was occupied by two people sharing 12 hours a week and later on occupied by Anne Lewis alone doing as many hours as she could. Anne has just retired and an attempt to replace Anne fell through which gave me the idea to give myself a chance to understand the demands of the job before we take the next step to recruit another person.

Parish Treasurer: Since Alf left Chris Park took over and he initially relied on Alf but now he is doing an excellent job on his own. The Parish Treasurer is supported by Mary Marsh on Gift Aid and Sundrella on the 100 Plus Club. All these jobs were at some stage under the one-man Alf. The three: Chris, Mary and Sundrella form what we call the Parish Finance Committee which is supported by Chris Burger, Sam Craig and the Parish Priest.

Parish Advisory Council is an advisory council to the Parish Priest. Members are nominated by individuals from the parish community to serve on the council for a period of three years. It is composed of nine nominated members and three ex-officio, comprised of the Treasurer, Maintenance Committee chair (Zbigniew Twaroski) and Site manager (Sue Stubbings).

Safeguarding: Kevin Douglas is the sole person who has to be on his toes to make sure our various ministries are being carried out according to safeguarding rules and regulations.

Sacramental Programmes

Children's Baptism: Susan van Ling is responsible for preparing parents for the baptism of their children.

First Holy Communion: Carol Ann Harnett is the lead person for the team that prepares children and parents of the candidates for the Communion programme. Carol Ann is supported by Edyta Mills, Susan Van Ling, and Tanja.

Confirmation: Sue Stubbings and Rebecca Surman are responsible for preparing children for this.

RCIA: Carol Ann and Fr Naz are behind this programme.

Marriage Prep: Chris and Liz Burger are responsible for the preparation of those who wish to get married. They certainly are not kept busy in this parish.

Parish Groups

Music Group: Liz Burger coordinates the music services of the parish. We are so lucky to have the variety of music, alternating between the orchestra which carries a variety of musical instruments, guitar led by Mary Taylor, flute by Paul and organ by Bernadette Eakin. Please encourage anyone, especially young people who play any instrument, to be part of the music team of the parish.

Readers/Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist/Stewards:

These groups carry a number of parishioners involved in these ministries as follows: 16 readers, 22 Extra-ordinary Ministers of the Eucharist and 15 Stewards. Al Hood is responsible for drawing up rotas for all these which is a tedious exercise.

One World Group (OWG): The One World Group is the tool of the parish to reach out to those in need both at home and abroad. Michael Townson is the lead person of this group. This group is desperately in need of new membership from the community.

The Angelus Group meets for the Angelus Prayer every Saturday via Zoom following which there is a Lectio Divina on the Sunday readings. Anyone is welcome to join. Francesca Townson takes the lead in this group.

Thursday Group: A support group within the parish community that meets fortnightly. Di Walsh is the lead person. Great window for socialising. They organise social events and speakers on various subject matters. Currently dominated by ladies but it is a group open to men as well.

Youth Group: Suzie Wolf and Sam Craig are very much committed to accompanying and involving the youth of our parish in the liturgical celebrations.

Altar Servers: Edd leads this group. We have a dedicated number of young people who are very much involved in the liturgical services of the parish.

SVP: This group is non-existent now but I feel that there a lot of work for the SVP considering that there are so many lonely people in Melvern and quite a few elderly people who may need to come to church but there is no tool in the parish to facilitate transportation of such people.

Gospel Share: An inspiring group that meets every Friday evening to reflect and share on the Sunday readings. This group too could do with new members.

St. Joseph's WhatsApp Prayer Group: I would like to encourage as many people as possible to join this group. Prayer needs are posted to the group and members render prayer support and encouragement.

Rosary Group: Meets every Monday to say the rosary together. Members have been very helpful in leading rosaries in church during the months of May and October. Another group that can do with more membership.

Church Cleaners / Flower arrangers: I salute these two groups for their dedication in keeping our church clean and so well decorated. Mary-Rose Hughes is the lead person for church cleaners and Anne Garner is the lead person for the flower arrangers.

Climate Group: With the departure of Ginny, the Climate Group has been inactive. We need to revive this group since it has been responsible for Mass on the Hills which will likely continue for a number of years.

Communication

Parish website: Al Hood is the person responsible.

Magazine: Margaret Rank works so hard in this. I suppose she would appreciate to have a team working with her. *(More people would certainly be very welcome. Ed)*

Facebook: Sundrella does an excellent job. She appreciates if people send her information of what is going on.

Twitter: Edd Hogan does an excellent job disseminating information of what is going on.

Synodality: A team comprised of Michael Townson (convenor of meetings), Roger Watson, Pauline Kirton, Sam Craig and Francesca Townson has been very helpful. We have joint meetings with the two Severn parishes of Upton and Blackmore and St Wulstan.

Socials and Reaching Out

I have allowed the use of the McEnnis room for use by the Ukrainian community in Malvern to teach art to their kids. They meet every Saturday afternoon. Besides this they have use of the church for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Liturgy every second Sunday of the month.

Sunday Tea/ Coffee: I am so pleased that we now have a cup of coffee/tea every Sunday after Mass.

Reaching Out to Parents: An ambitious initiative has taken place to offer tea/coffee and cake in the McEnnis Room to the parents of children in our school at the pick-up time every Monday. The first experience last week was very positive. For this to continue we shall need volunteers from the parish to serve tea and coffee as well as volunteers to donate cakes. Also, everyone is welcome to pop in and have a chat with the parents.

I would like to encourage people of the parish not to hesitate to be part of any of these groups or to resuscitate those that are dormant.

Fr Naz

PAC Chair's Report

Our parish continues to thrive and grow following almost two years of Covid measures. We have seen a reduction in Mass-going Catholics and many others have reassessed how they contribute to the life of the parish. This is how parish communities evolve: adapting to the world around them and navigating a path through the things we can't control.

We are exceptionally blessed to have a very able, committed and spirit-filled parish priest in Fr Naz. He has been a blessing for all of us since the day he arrived and we thank God for his caring ministry to us.

The PAC exists to help the parish priest in understanding the needs of the parish, the 'direction of travel' and where to prioritise often competing views (which are all equally valid). We help the parish priest in decision-making – we do not make the decisions. This is an important point and one that sets our PAC apart from other similar bodies.

The hand of the PAC has been involved in things like the arrangements looking after the fabric of the building, our interaction and collaboration with the school, engagement in the Synodal process, liturgical planning and coordination, and so on. We work closely with the Finance Committee and Maintenance Group.

In terms of some practicalities, the PAC has overseen the purchase of a parish defibrillator. Thank you to those who contributed towards the cost of this. We are contributing to the conversation about updating the McEnnis Room. We are looking at offering simple (one day) pilgrimages to places like St Winifride's Well in North Wales (more on that later in the year). I am looking into the availability of grants to help with refurbishing the church toilets.

The spiritual life of the parish is at the centre of our church. We have worked with Fr Naz to look at the provision of Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist (including the reintroduction of holy communion under both kinds), taking holy communion to the housebound, the sacramental programmes we offer, children's liturgy provision, and much more.

We face some challenges in the future and the PAC together with the whole parish needs to think about these now. There will be parish consolidation simply due to the availability of priests. We do not know how this may impact St Joseph's. Our deanery has already been enlarged to

include the parishes of the Kidderminster area as well as most of Worcestershire.

The PAC draws together a range of people, talents, interests so that we can be as representative as possible and give Fr Naz different perspectives. Each meetings begins and ends with a prayer. We may disagree at times but we come back together to that point of focus – our shared love of God and desire to be servants of the Gospel.

Hopefully this summary provides you with a good insight into what the PAC does and how we contribute to the life of our parish.

Edd Hogan, Chair PAC

Financial Statement

The parish was left a legacy by Beryl Gaunt on the 29/04/20 which eventually totalled **£571,139.33**.

The parish's bank balance on 25/05/22 was **£158,026.40** with **£200,000** invested in the Archdiocesan Unit Trust scheme on 22/07/21.

The deficit for the last 12 months is - **£29,793.18**

Large expenses include: Boiler **£8,467.80**

Garden Maintenance **£2,380**

Gas costs **£11,434.23**

Electricity **£4,399.91**

Office wages were reduced by £5,420.92 as we went down to one administrator.

The Archdiocesan auditor accepted our 2022 End of Year accounts as always! However he moved some of the Church Improvements to Church Establishment. This explains these two figures in the accounts.

Overall we increased our income by **£3,640.92** and decreased our expenses by **£5,019.40**

Thank you all for giving so generously to the Church to keep our community thriving!

Chris Park,,Parish Treasurer

06/21-05/22 06/22-05/23

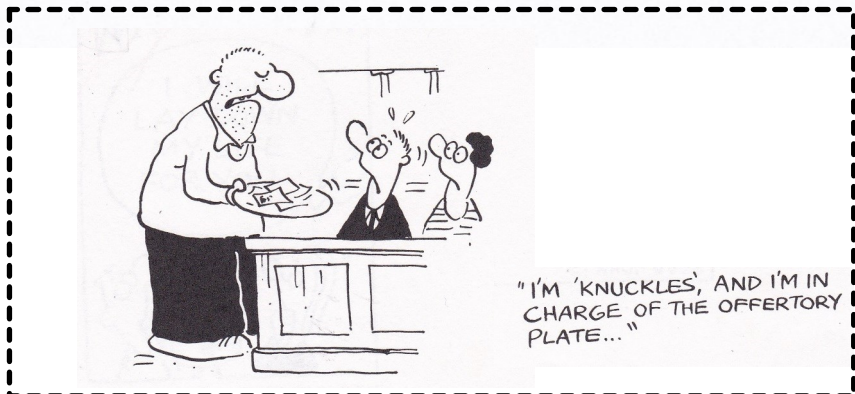
INCOME JUN21 to MAY22	£	£
Offertories Gift Aid	32985.50	28057.00
Offertories Non-Gift Aid	8268.22	10334.59
Donations Gift Aid	1000.00	1550.00
Donations Non-Gift Aid	935.75	2386.57
Gift Aid	8420.95	10328.73
Votive Candles	321.69	504.04
Piety	61.00	222.60
100+	5230.00	5400.00
McKennies Room Hire	800.00	1647.00
Bank Interest	1.40	721.89
Unit Trust interest	1807.62	3660.50
Legacies(Beryl Gaunt)	1339.87	0.00
Total	61172.00	64812.92

Bank Balance MAY 31st 2022 187819.58

Bank Balance MAY 24th 2023 158026.40

Unit Trust 200000.00

Bank Reduction -29793.18



	06/21-05/22	06/22-05/23
EXPENDITURE JUN21 to MAY22	£	£
Church Liturgical/Pastoral	5554.23	4032.91
Parish Retreat	666.02	0.00
House Domestic	6338.14	5094.15
Piety	0.00	0.00
Votive Candles	85.99	0.00
100+	2662.50	2475.00
Donations	85.00	390.00
Supply Priests	440.00	1065.60
Clergy Allowance/ Nat Ins	5896.00	4484.00
Expenses incl. mileage	1496.39	3465.06
Clergy other costs	0.00	460.00
Clergy Clerical Medical	200.00	200.00
Parish Levies	15907.22	15915.08
Wages	18919.07	13498.15
Office -Telephone & Internet	614.86	640.34
Other Office expenses	1687.99	3038.66
Bank Charges	391.88	454.16
Gas	4339.11	11434.23
Church Electricity	666.52	1490.59
Water	852.50	693.65
Church Establishment	3830.69	12143.76
Church Property Maintenance	4890.58	-2575.51
House Electricity	950.49	2909.32
Council Tax	1470.69	1530.69
House Establishment	536.28	0.00
House Property Maintenance	655.94	1274.03
Sound, Cameras & Interactive Screen	15476.78	0.00
Boiler	2986.20	8467.80
Total	97601.07	92581.67
Opas Reduction	-36429.07	-27768.75
OWG Reduction	-2040.00	-1764.06
Total Reduction	-38469.07	-29532.81
Garden Property Maintenance	2093.50	2380.00

Meet the New Members of the PAC

Max Mainini has been in the parish for 11 years, having moved here from London, where, apart from three years in Europe, he had previously always lived.

‘I live in Malvern with my wife Fran and son Luca and we are regulars at St Joseph’s. I work in natural health as a craniosacral therapist and have done for more than 15 years. My wife and I are Eucharistic Ministers and enjoy being part of the fabric of this parish. I have wanted to be more involved recently, so joining the PAC was a natural step (I needed a little nudge though) and I look forward to supporting Fr Naz alongside the other PAC members for the benefit of the parish.’

Christian Dowle was previously in Ledbury parish but has been part of St Joseph’s for the last 23 years. He has a particular interest in liturgy (post Vatican 2) and previously helped with the parish’s music. He has also helped with the school garden.

‘We have brought up our five children in the parish, all of whom have left home now. I am concerned that young people are no longer finding the church relevant to their day to day experience of society and that we are not promoting the wonderful ‘deposit of faith’ passed down to us to the wider community. I include myself! I believe that the Holy Spirit is moving in the laity of the church if we have the courage to listen and ask the difficult questions.’

Other elected members of the PAC are: Edd Hogan (Chair), Susan van Ling, Christopher Louise, Helen Morgans, Cathy Showell, Mary Taylor, Zbigniew Twarowski and Barbara Wortley.

For more on the school garden see page 16.



The School Library



The library is now finished and we are in the process of training some of our eldest children to be librarians. It is a beautiful space, much loved by the children and has been named in honour of the late Dr Pam Taylor, former parishioner and Chair of Governors, whose picture and dedication is hung on the wall. On the afternoon of Friday the 14th July there will be an open afternoon when any parishioners and or parents, who would like to come and see how different projects are developing in school, including the library, will be most welcome. More details will follow shortly.

Therese Langford, Headteacher



Thank You, Malvern!

From the Ukrainian Support Group

We both came to the wonderful town of Malvern last year, fleeing the war in Ukraine. We were met by wonderful people, Christopher Bayley and Alison Findlay, and John and Susan Raine, all of whom we sincerely thank for giving us the opportunity to be here and to develop and support our children. Indeed, we also want to thank all of the many English families who are helping Ukrainian families.

We particularly wanted to help all the children, who are in most need of protection at this difficult time for all Ukrainians, and we wanted to address their vulnerability with one big loving heart wrapped in the love of all those of us who attend our regular meetings. We are especially grateful to Father Nazarius and his church team for supporting our group "Talented children of Ukraine in Malvern" and who has given us the opportunity to meet every week on Saturday at St Joseph's Catholic Church, 125 Newtown Road, Malvern, WR14 1PF.

Also, many thanks to Father Lubomir and Father Tim who unite us in prayer and have become a key part of our spiritual heart here in Malvern. Each meeting of our children is helpful in developing their skills in communication, in drawing, in singing, in games and in celebrating their birthdays. We so appreciate the protection, love, understanding and support that are the hallmarks of our sessions together. Indeed, happy, smiling and joyful children are what unites us all! A sincere thank you to Felicity Tutton and John Raine, for suggesting that we write this article and in assisting in its writing for publication in the journal. Your kind guidance is so helpful!

We also particularly appreciated meeting the wonderful Jenni Griggs, who has been helping in the development of our circle, and we thank her very much for all the good advice and support for our ideas, as well as her help and love for children. We also want to thank Gerry Savage for the generous donation in support of our circle, and Aga Mat for her support and assistance, which is proving so valuable to us. Many thanks also to Alison Maddrell for the wonderful work that she does for so many other Ukrainian families besides our circle. And we



send our greetings to everyone from Bristol who have been helping us with donations and parcels. We are so grateful for all your help and contributions which have made the children so happy. And we also want to thank the Council in Malvern for supporting our circle with various materials and sweets for the children, and similarly, the Council in Worcester for the help provided in relation to training in drawing. Furthermore, special thanks are owed to Libby Allen of the Arts Society (Malvern Hills) for arranging a wonderful visit for all of us Ukrainian guests to view clay modelling at Eastnor Pottery.

We all so appreciate the contributions that so many people have made to the development of our circle. And what a great team our little kids have already become, with strong foundations having been laid for their on-going happiness and development. We look forward to being able to expand the opportunities for the development of all the children in our circle, with teenagers and others joining us as they improve their English, engage in dance, music, and various arts and crafts according to their individual interests. We invite all children and adults to join us and we will be extremely pleased to meet everyone of you! We will also be delighted to receive further sponsorship and other support for our exciting mission - to open a Ukrainian school as a new initiative in this lovely town of Malvern.



Children's Day celebration at St Joseph's Sunday 11 June

You can follow us and our activities on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/683529379972695/?ref=share>

And you are welcome to join our WhatsApp group <https://chat.whatsapp.com/HJsnbf5klRJ7DAci0PX2XT>

Natalya Kuchmak and Marianna Golub

Completing Ride London 2023

to support the Teenage Cancer Trust

Edd Hogan signed up along with his wife, Ella, to take part in Ride London – a closed road cycling event in London and Essex that saw 20,000 riders take to their bikes to complete a 100 mile route that took them out of London as far as Braintree, taking in Epping, Chipping Ongar, Chelmsford, and Chigwell as well as the landmarks of London.

When Edd's nephew – Tom – was diagnosed with an aggressive brain cancer just a few weeks before the event Edd decided to turn his participation into a sponsored ride to raise money for the Teenage Cancer Trust. Tom is receiving treatment at Leeds Children's Hospital and has been a patient on the Teenage Cancer Trust ward where the overall look and feel is geared towards what teenagers want and need. Having an age-specific ward has helped with the initial rounds of chemotherapy.



*Riding down The Mall
towards the early morning start*

Edd said, “I might not be able to cure Tom's cancer but I'm not going to just sit around and do nothing. This is my way of helping to support Tom and our wider family.” Edd has raised around £3,000 in the weeks leading up to the event. He said, “People have been so kind in their words, encouragement and also the sponsorship. And as my brother said, ‘Teenage Cancer Trust do some excellent work and I hope you never have to use them’”.

Edd's finish time was 5 hours 19 minutes (with an overall average pace of 30.7kph). Ella finished a little later having suffered a pretty bad mechanical failure at mile 53. She got to the end though and got her medal, and a well-earned full sugar, full caffeine Coke!



A chilly start for Edd and Ella in the shade of Whitehall buildings as they make their way to the start line.



Having completed the 100 miles, Edd collected his medal at the end of the ride just past Tower Bridge.

A Place of Reflection

Back in 2017 there was a photo in the magazine showing a corner of the school grounds with a few words noting that this was 'the site and beginnings' of a Prayer Garden. It didn't look too promising a picture at that point. The 'beginnings' seemed to comprise a rope cordon round the site and a partially cleared, rather scruffy looking, patch of earth. The picture in the minds of those involved, however, was very different and six years and many hours of hard, hard work later it is their picture which is the reality. There are flowers and trees and shrubs and grass. There are wonderfully simple Stations of the Cross and there is a rustic 'chapel' with seating and a beautiful mosaic of a cross on its floor.

The hard work was mainly put in initially by Sue and Mark Stubbings and a work party of staff and parents. At a later stage Christian Dowle's professional skills were brought in to complete the structure of the garden. Lucy Richardson, aided by two Year 6 boys, designed and made the cross mosaic. Now the garden is mainly looked after by the school gardeners, though the hope is to get a work party of children, staff and parents in the future. The enterprise was funded by a mixture of donations and fundraising efforts in both the school and the parish. (You may remember a Parish Race Night which helped in this respect.)

The garden is of course primarily there for the children and they make good use of it. Classes can be found there regularly, especially in the summer, having quiet time, praying, writing and sharing their reflections and, according to Sue, thoroughly enjoying their time there. She gives a recent example of a Year 4 group whose learning about the Holy Spirit came alive when they sat quietly in the garden watching the movement of the breeze on the grass.

The Feast of Corpus Christi this year saw the parish too making use of the garden, when Fr Naz led the procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose there. This may have been the first time many parishioners saw or even were aware of its existence.

Like every garden in the world, this one is a work in progress. Future plans include acquiring more flowers, especially ones with a sensory appeal such as lavender.

So if you have any such going begging . . .

Margaret Rank

With thanks to Sue Stubbings for the guided tour and information



Children's written prayers around the mosaic cross



Left: the entrance to the garden



Right: two of the Stations of the Cross



The Corpus Christi procession

Farewell to Lucy

Lucy Richardson has been a member of our parish community for 13 years and a member of staff at St Joseph's school for twelve years. Sadly she will be leaving us to move closer to family at the end of the Summer term this year.

Her three children attended St Joseph's school and they are all valued and familiar parishioners. The whole family will be missed by us all.

When asked for a comment on her position at St Joseph's from secretary to Early Years to deputy head teacher she said, "I am massively grateful to the school and to Mrs Langford for giving me the opportunity to work in this nurturing and caring school".

Her colleague and friend Helen Morgans wrote the following tribute:

'Lucy has been a special part of the parish and will be sorely missed by so many (especially those linked to the school).

With her eldest son Sam starting at St Joseph's in 2011, Lucy joined the baby and toddler group (bringing along Joe and Charlie) and became an important and special part of the family life of the parish. Her welcoming, positive nature has always made others feel at ease and valued and, being a trained teacher, she used all these skills to assist with children's liturgies and with pre-school events (linking with the parish).

The Evening of Light was Lucy's vision as a way to link the school with parish and to raise much needed funds for the pre-school. Since the first Evening of Light, Lucy's energy, enthusiasm and creativity, has made it such a special annual event.

Since joining the school as a teacher (and currently Assistant Head), Lucy's faith, enthusiasm, positivity and creativity continues to inspire the children of the parish through lessons at school. She has organised all the church 'well dressings', developing our school/parish links and, in addition, encouraging

Lucy, in the centre of the picture, with her school colleagues and friends



people from around Malvern to visit our church. Lucy can often be seen bringing children from school into the church to aid in their R.E. learning and she makes learning about the Catholic faith enjoyable and accessible for all pupils.

Lucy, Sam, Joe and Charlie have been great friends to so many in the parish, leaving a lasting impact and we pray that their move North will be a happy one.'

On behalf of Fr Naz, the parish, the Parish Advisory Council, St Joseph's Catholic School and the Governing Body we wish you all a wonderful future and you will remain in our prayers, our thoughts and our memories. God Bless.

Susan van Ling

Music at Mass

"If music be the food of love, play on...." The opening words from Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare.

Fr Naz said recently that we are fortunate in our parish to have a variety of music at the 10a.m. Mass. And so we are. We have four music leaders, each with their own style, who are committed to their ministry and bring life to our worship. Mary leads with guitar, Paul with violin, Bernadette with organ and me, Liz, with piano and a group of instrumentalists (currently, violin, guitar, bassoon, flute, viola, and voice). We select music according to the theme of the Sunday of the year or feast day. We meet every quarter, along with Fr Naz and those people involved with Sacramental programmes, to discuss the liturgies coming up, and I create a rota.

As my group has several members, communication is vital as we do not have practices other than half an hour before Mass begins. I select the hymns and the Mass setting 10 days before we are due to play. These are emailed to the group members so that they can prepare for Mass, as well as to Fr Naz and the parish office.

None of the music just happens. Much thought and preparation are invested. Each of the music leaders would welcome support in the form of instrumentalists and singers to encourage participation. Past requests for parishioners to consider using their talents in our music have fallen on deaf ears!! PLEASE think about it and speak to Mary, Bernadette, Paul, or myself.

Liz Burger

The Parish of the Future - The Future of the Parish

What are we (the laity) about?

It is unlikely that many of us - if any at all - have taken the time, or made the effort to read the Code of Canon Law which governs the Catholic Church; we do, after all, have lives to lead.

The model of the Church enshrined in Canon Law is very much one of a top-down hierarchical institution in which power is vested in the bishops, who can delegate it to the parish priests. The role of the laity is still cast very much in the ‘pray, pay, obey’ mould, and although they are “empowered – indeed sometimes obliged – to manifest their opinion on those things which pertain to the good of the Church” (Vatican II *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*) they have no right of audience.

In our country, and others, this model of Church is heading into crisis as the level of Mass attendance and the number of priests is in rapid decline (but, interestingly, not the number of bishops). Although behind the scenes discussions are taking place on how to manage the decline, the faithful in the pews are admonished to ‘pray for more priests’, a prayer which the Holy Spirit seems increasingly reluctant to heed. At the ‘official’ level there is talk of merging or ‘clustering’ parishes, which may have the effect of further burdening priests who are already overworked. If one were slightly irreverent, these discussions would seem to have certain parallels with re-arranging the deckchairs on the *Titanic*. The interesting thing is that the laity seem to be passive participants in this process, even though they are the ones that will be most seriously affected. It is, for example, significant that a deanery meeting took place recently in our parish discussing these matters, but the role of the people of the parish was restricted to cooking lunch for the priests.

What’s to do?

Under Canon 204, “The Christian faithful have become sharers in Christ’s priestly, prophetic and royal office“. But what does this mean? It is suggested that we in the parish have four main functions:

- to evangelise
- to worship and proclaim the Word
- to serve and exercise stewardship
- to exercise leadership

All of these activities can be summarised under the obligation which each of us has under Canon 210 “All the Christian faithful must direct their efforts to lead a holy life and to promote the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification”.

It would be helpful if there were a body within the parish that can promote and co-ordinate these activities; I would respectfully suggest that the present arrangement with a PAC that only meets four times a year is not fit for this purpose. An alternative model is provided, for example, by the Diocese of Manchester (<https://www.catholicnh.org/assets/Documents/Parishes/Councils/ParishPastoralCouncilGuidelines.pdf>). It is to be hoped that a parish forward planning meeting scheduled for 17th July will be able to carry this forward.

At the same time we must strengthen and reinforce those bodies within the parish that make a valuable contribution towards promoting our parish mission, for example:

Our school (evangelisation, worship, word, stewardship, leadership)

The Gospelshare Group, the Liturgy Group, the Music Group, Altar servers, the Rosary Group, the Angelus Group (worship and word)

RCIA, Sacramental programmes (evangelise, worship, leadership)

CAFOD, One World Group, Christian Aid (serve and lead).

It is also important that we make full use of those opportunities which Canon Law does leave open for the laity, for example Canon 230 #3 stipulates that “When the need of the Church warrants it and ministers are lacking, lay persons ... can also supply certain of their duties, namely to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer baptism and to distribute Holy Communion”.

So, in conclusion, the Church is greater than the Episcopate or the Presbyterate, who only make up a small proportion of the ‘Christian faithful’, and it is time that the laity stop hiding behind priests and take and exercise full responsibility for “promoting the growth of the Church and its continual sanctification” (Canon 210).

Michael Townson

Seen on the noticeboard of a New York parish: ‘Do come in - Trespassers will be forgiven.’

A Youth Mass

The third Sunday in Lent was billed as a Youth Mass at St Joseph's, Malvern. The previous Youth Mass had included some very appealing puppets re-enacting the Gospel story. Clearly we could expect something lively and stimulating from our young people this time, but what would they come up with?

It was indeed memorable! First let me explain. Those who have not yet experienced a Youth Mass at St Joe's, be assured that the structure of the liturgy is unaltered. Everything you would expect happens reverently and in full order, but some important aspect of the liturgy is selected for special attention to make it stand out from the ordinary and give it a lively twist. The puppets acting out the gospel some weeks ago was a "visual" aid. This Lenten Mass became a "tactile" experience!

The group, under the leadership of Suzie Wolff and Sam Craig (and possibly other able and imaginative adults whose names I have not yet gleaned!) picked up on the gospel story of the Samaritan woman who came to a full recognition of who Jesus really is whilst drawing water from Jacob's well. The Church uses water from Baptism onwards as a powerful symbol. The congregation was soon to receive holy water administered, (very generously, and frequently powerfully) by each young person through the device of a small bunch of herbs dipped in holy water. Several of us had to remove and dry our spectacles!

We then renewed our Baptismal Vows, (or maybe they came before the dousing). What is certain is this: these young people are learning about their faith in an active way, and enjoying expressing themselves within the context of Holy Mass. The young are the future of the church. The only comments I heard afterwards were really positive. Thank you to all who made it possible. Well done.

P.S. A wee note to thank the readers who had obviously prepared the readings well, and to those who wrote the most moving prayers of Intercession. May I just ask that you trust Jesus and ask Him to hold your hand when you are facing the full church? It is a scary prospect, I know. I'm still nervous about reading, but with encouragement from Our Lord, you can project your voice so that everyone can receive the Word of God . . . even those of us who are somewhat deaf!

Margaret Allen

That memorable Mass was followed more recently by one where the congregation found itself facing up to its sins by being asked to write them on pieces of paper, which were afterwards ceremonially burned. Doubtless there will be more stimulating Youth Masses to come.

Dear Pope Francis

Why do you like to play soccer? Wishing you good health

Wing, Age 8, China

Dear Wing

I really like soccer. I have never played serious matches because I never learned the art of the game that well. I don't have a nimble foot. But I really like watching the teams on the field. Do you know why? Because I see teamwork and unity.

I get excited watching a match. If a player wants to play all by himself, he loses, and then his teammates will not like him. To play soccer well, you must play together. You must play as a team and look for the good of everyone without thinking about your personal gain or showing off. It ought to be this way in the church too!

Dear Pope Francis

Where is your favourite place to pray, and why?

From Josephine, age 8, United Kingdom

Dear Josephine

You know, I like to pray everywhere. I can even pray at my desk or in my armchair in the living room. Many times in the evening I'm tired, so I don't go down to the chapel but stay in my room and pray. I love to be in front of the Blessed Sacrament. I do that often. I very much like to go there and sit in silence before God. But I can also pray while walking, or even when I go to the dentist. I find God everywhere.

Franciscus

From Dear Pope Francis, The Pope answers questions from children around the World

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The Important Thing

In the late 1970s I struggled to believe and stopped going to church for two years, returning to St Joseph's, "just for Christmas". Eight weeks later I was still attending and read in the bulletin that the nuns of Stanbrook Abbey had invited the parish prayer group to visit them. I joined them and twenty or more of us sat in a circle after a beautiful service and enjoyed tea and cake and chat, in the days when there were more than enough nuns for one each. I had hardly begun to speak, when the nun before me said, "Oh, I'm not the one for you, you need . . ." and handed me over to her neighbour. I began again, relating the happenings of the past two years.

Sister Maria was a good listener and encouraged me to return any time, though I remember thinking, "but I've told you everything I have to tell you" and could not imagine what more there might be to say. Then I went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to act afresh in my life, so that there was after all something to tell Maria. Later I realised that she would have started praying for me, so perhaps she wasn't surprised when soon I asked to see her again, because praying, which had become so easy, one day suddenly wasn't. I had run out of my own words, reading prayers didn't work and not knowing what to do in the face of complete boredom by my efforts to pray, I contacted Maria again. Undisturbed, she said, "Just wait, whilst I get a book from the library", and on her return, handed me "Spiritual Letters" - a collection of letters written by lay people to a Benedictine Abbot, John Chapman. She gave me two particular pages to read, saying, "whether or not they make sense to you, come back anyway". When I read that "being willing to give time to prayer each day, not giving up when the time spent felt wasted, due to endless distractions, but instead leaving that to God", was the important thing, this showed me the way forward.

The following is a quote in a letter from a lay person to a contemplative nun: "I have heard of Meditation and Contemplation and sometimes the words seem to be interchangeable. Is there a difference between the two?" The response was: "... the basic difference between Meditation and Contemplation is that Meditation is a human mode of prayer, whereas Contemplation is divinely infused prayer. St Teresa of Avila uses Water as an image of various stages of prayer. Meditation corresponds to the First Water and is an invitation to contemplative prayer, the characteristic prayer for all who are in this early stage of spiritual growth, perseverance in it being key to growth."

Pauline Kirton

Living in Harmony

The wealth of diversity

In Scripture, the variety of languages was originally presented as a curse and a punishment at the Tower of Babel as men tried reaching the sky and God said, “Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:7) In the same way that the Incarnation is understood as the reconciliation between God and man, so at Pentecost, when the people of many tongues gathered in Jerusalem could all understand the Word of God in their own languages, the curse of Babel was rescinded and unity was restored.

You might remember that the One World Group recently conducted a language census in the parish. Some 150 questionnaires were distributed, and 75 people were kind enough to hand them back completed. What the results show is that members of our parish community have over 30 languages at their disposal, covering Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. At least 16 of these languages are used regularly; some 75% of those surveyed have at least two languages at their disposal, and some are fortunate enough to know up to four.

The 30 languages represented in our parish community are only a small proportion of the over 7000 languages spoken in the world, which reflect the variety and diversity of Creation with its over two million species - not bad for six days work!

The marvel of unity

If the wealth of diversity were not enough cause for wonder, we then find that in it there is a miraculous unity; as the environmentalist John Muir once said, “When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.” For me this is an extremely strong argument for the universe issuing from a single mind, which we call the Creator, or, quite simply, *God*.

The joy of belonging

We are all - all eight billion of us - children of God and an integral part of Their Creation. None of us are alone, and none of us have control of our destiny - whatever we might like to think. We are all part of the great web of Being, and just as we rely on each other and on the rest of Creation for our existence, we are also responsible for each other and for the rest of Creation. We all participate in the great Dance of Love* which

emanates from the Trinity - from God the Lover, Christ the Beloved and the Spirit of Love. This is not a dance where we can choose to say “I’ll sit this one out” and it is definitely not a dance for soloists or prima ballerinas. Neither is it a version of *Strictly Come Dancing*, where there are winners and losers. At the end, we all dance into Heaven together or none of us get there. So, “Take your partners...”.

Michael Townson

*The early Church Fathers, especially the fourth century Cappadocians, used an image to describe the Trinity, namely, a dance, perichoresis. The word is still used for a dance at Greek weddings, in which three people (at least) dance in ever faster circles, weaving in and out of one another in perfectly synchronised movements. In time, the dance becomes so fast and yet still so rhythmically harmonious, that the individuals appear to merge into one. These early Church Fathers used the word to describe the relationship of mutual, indwelling love that unites Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity, in other words, is what we mean when we say that God is love; and love is what we mean when we say that God is a trinity or communion of “persons”.

A Parish Administrator’s Day

Two editions ago we published Anne Lewis’s *Reflections of a Parish Administrator*. One of her reflections was her appreciation of the ‘administrators’ before her: - Ruth, who was the pastoral assistant; Lindsey; Edyta and Sam. (One could also add Pauline Kirton, who was parish secretary for many years, and who we hope will write her reminiscences for a later edition of the mag.) Now of course Anne herself has retired and joined the list of those who have worked in the parish office and to whom the whole parish owes a debt of gratitude.

I’m sure parishioners from every aspect of the parish’s life have reason to thank Anne for her concern and involvement. I can only speak for the magazine. Like her predecessors, she would always turn up to our meetings, notebook in hand, and as the one with her finger on the parish’s pulse could be relied upon to come up with suggestions. She would facilitate linking up with people – subject always to data protection rules and regulations. Best of all, you knew if she said she would do something, whether contacting people or writing something herself, then it would be done. There was more practical help, too. Since we’ve had photos in the mag, printing it has sometimes been a fraught affair,

involving leaping continually between two machines operating at different speeds and with their individual quirks and demands. Possibilities for confusion abound. Anne was always a calm and soothing presence in the background, coming to the foreground to help sort things out when needed.

Thank you, Anne.

Fr Naz is now giving himself 'the chance to understand the demands of the job' before seeking a replacement. Some time ago Anne wrote an account of two days in the parish office, which gives a taste of those demands. Day One appeared in Advent. Here is Day Two.

Margaret Rank

Day 2 - Thursday

8.25am I greet the gardeners as I walk to the house, and then sign in, boot up the pc, unlock the cupboards, and put the CCTV monitor on.

8.40am It is quiet in the house for a while so I have time to check the phone messages and my in-tray. Fr Naz has a meeting with other clergy in Malvern, but I know he will be back before 10.00am in time to set up for Exposition in the church. Thursdays is bulletin day and I begin the creation of our weekly newsletter.

9.40am Fr Naz has returned and he begins setting up ready for Exposition. This week's bulletin is now well-advanced with all the mass intentions and some of the weekly news. This week there is a new 7.45am mass time for Tuesdays so I need to remember to update that on the bulletin.

10.30am Time for tea, especially for Fr Naz who has had a busy morning. We go through any outstanding phone messages, most of which have been dealt with by Fr Naz.

10.42am I receive Fr Naz's reflection for the bulletin and give it a quick read before inserting it. He has forwarded more notices for the newsletter so we decide which of the older items should be removed as, once again, we could fill another page. And there is often a new urgent email which comes in for the bulletin, but not today!

10.55am Fr Naz has the draft copy of the bulletin for proof-reading. It is surprising how we can miss things between us even though we try to be thorough. This can take some time as there may be one or two phone interruptions or parishioners calling in before the editing is complete.

10.57am I check the advent candles which Sue has sorted out in readiness for collection. Wonderfully, Marie is always ready to pick up the

candles and set up the advent wreath. I must let her know that the candles are ready for her.

11.09am I head to the narthex again armed with collection bags, second collection baskets and labels, posters and instructions for the Stewards at the weekend masses.

11.11am Just time to check that the heating is on in the McEnnis Room for a meeting which will take place later.

11.15am Fr Naz has made a few amendments to the bulletin, the final amendment is made and I print a few copies for the sacristy and narthex, for displaying on the notice boards and for housebound parishioners.

11.30am At this point, the bulletin work is nearly done. Creating the weekly email to those parishioners who are happy to receive the bulletin by email is an enjoyable task. This week there are a couple of extra notices to be attached to the email and I hope they are in a format that I can send out.

11.32am The doorbell ring interrupts my flow of work. The CCTV monitor shows there is a regular passer-by. I go to answer the door and she asks for a drink of water and a banana and tells me what she has been up to today.

11.50am Time to check that the bulletin email has gone to all its recipients, then I start to fold the few bulletins that go out by post. The address labels for these are updated and printed and so I fill the envelopes, label and stamp them and go off to post them.

12.15pm The bulletins are taken to the narthex and put up on the noticeboard and the door. I hope I do not disturb those praying quietly in the church today. It is lovely and peaceful in the church.

12.30pm I leave any post and messages for Fr Naz and lock up the office.

12.36pm Time to switch off, shut down the pc for a few days and leave messages for Chris and Sue to pick up next week. If there is anything the office team need to discuss there is always our WhatsApp group!

Anne Lewis

Thank You as always to our wonderful contributors, the volunteers and the volunteered. Please keep the copy coming, and watch the bulletin for the next copy day..

Sorry there's no room for a **Groan** this time. Or maybe there just is . . .

What do you call a sleepwalking nun? A 'roamin' Catholic.