

Our Mission Together

This diocesan initiative was announced at Mass recently, in a letter from Bishop Mark Davies. Involvement in this capital fund appeal is expected from all parishes in the diocese. Our parish is fortunate that St Alban's parish was one of the "pilot" parishes, so Fr Peter Burke was able to describe his views and experiences.

This appeal to create a capital fund is specifically aimed at:

- **Strengthening and advancing our parishes by responding to local needs and projects;** 15% of fund raised will earmarked for this, so for example St Alban's have identified their building maintenance as their parish project
- **Supporting a new generation of priests in their discernment and training and providing for our faithful priests through their years of service and for those moving into retirement;** it is worth noting that last year's appeal for the clergy raised around £15,000 across the diocese. As just one part of clergy support, the training of new priests costs around £30,000 per year, and currently the diocese is training five priests. So the area of support to our clergy has a considerable funding gap.
- **Developing our mission and social outreach;** plans include the recruitment of two youth leaders to help parishes develop activities which engage with the children and youth.

Parishioners will learn more about this appeal in the next few weeks, and will be:

- Provided with more information about the key priorities and targets for the parish
- Provided with information in as personal a manner as possible, involving clergy and lay volunteers
- Given the time and space needed to make a private, personal and informed decision

Supporting this appeal is entirely voluntary. The appeal will be conducted through the support of parish volunteers, diocesan support and experienced fundraising consultants. Other dioceses have successfully undertaken similar capital appeals, in particular in Portsmouth, Westminster and Nottingham. The experience of these dioceses and the pilot parishes has been that such appeals have achieved their fundraising targets and have demonstrated that the costs associated with the fundraising consultants are worthwhile.

The Diocese has worked with the fundraising consultants to review the capital fund needed to develop and operate these three areas for a period of 10 years, with the capital fundraising being carried out over a 5 year period. The capital fund target has been distributed proportionally between the different parishes in the diocese based upon their size and cost to operate. This appeal is in addition to the general regular offertory collections and donations within the parish.

The capital fund will be entirely used in the three areas identified. Although the detailed process is still to be defined, it is intended that parishes will have a full view on how the fund is managed and used, and the outcomes achieved, so that the management of the fund can be called to account.

Children and youth in the parish

The meeting discussed the importance of working with the children and youth in their journey of faith and involvement in the parish. The activities within Little Church, the first sacraments, and confirmation are key milestones; however these can become separate activities with insufficient continuity of support and involvement between and beyond these milestones to retain their engagement. Barriers to involvement were recognised, such as sports activities on Sunday mornings, the lack of formal involvement of children and youth in roles in the Mass other than altar serving, and that groups of friends forms more around the attendance at one schools in the local area than around the parish. Suggestions included children reading at Mass, taking collections, music group, offertory procession, etc. There was a general agreement that the Parish should focus on children between their first Communion and Confirmation to make them strongly feel a member of our Parish. Making the Vigil mass on Saturday more appropriate to children and youth may be part of an overall approach.

The youth activities organised a few years ago by John and Sarah Kalnins were well received, and the formation of the new XCell group for the 11+ year olds based at St Albans is a good opportunity which collectively the parish and parents could support, e.g. sharing cars or a minibus from Poynton.

The parish meeting welcomed the Our Mission Together focus on the younger members of the parish.

Parish activities

From the feedback received, many parish activities need more support. If you are interested in helping any of the activities then why not try a short trial period to see whether it is for you?

The services of **Eucharistic ministers** are increasingly in demand for taking communion to parishioners unable to attend Mass. Elderly and infirm parishioners can feel “cut off” from the parish community when they are unable to attend Mass or parish events; so this outreach beyond the congregation attending Mass is an important part of respecting the needs of the whole parish community. The question for parishioners to answer could be “why wouldn’t you want to take communion out to our elderly and infirm parishioners”?

Little Church would welcome more support, both in running the activity, but also helping to make its activities more prominent in church and during Mass.

The **Finance team** need help, as soon the parish bank account will be held at Lloyds Bank, the local branches are in Hazel Grove and Macclesfield. So making cash deposits needs help from a car driver. One person has volunteered already, but the more people that help reduces the number of times people are called on. The question was raised on whether the parish should recognise **Father’s Day** as well Mother’s Day. The meeting agreed that the role of fathers should be recognised and celebrated. The normal date in the UK for Father’s Day is the third Sunday of June, so there is time to discuss and organise something appropriate.

Thanks

Our thanks to Peter Milham for organising the meeting, to Steve Robinson and Sue Wearden for taking notes, to Peter Robinson for handing around the wireless microphone, and to Jacqui Feely for providing the opening and closing prayers for the meeting. And of course our thanks are due to the parishioners who attended the meeting, and willingly gave their time and attention to the matters arising.

The next parish meeting

The parish is expected to have at least one parish meeting a year. The parish can have more meetings to discuss our parish matters, and to be a forum for specific issues that need a direction or approach discussed. So for example, future meetings could discuss the approach to engaging with the children and youth of our parish, a discussion of ideas that could be supported from the Our Mission Together fund, etc.

ST PAUL’S PARISH MEETING, 9th OCTOBER 2016

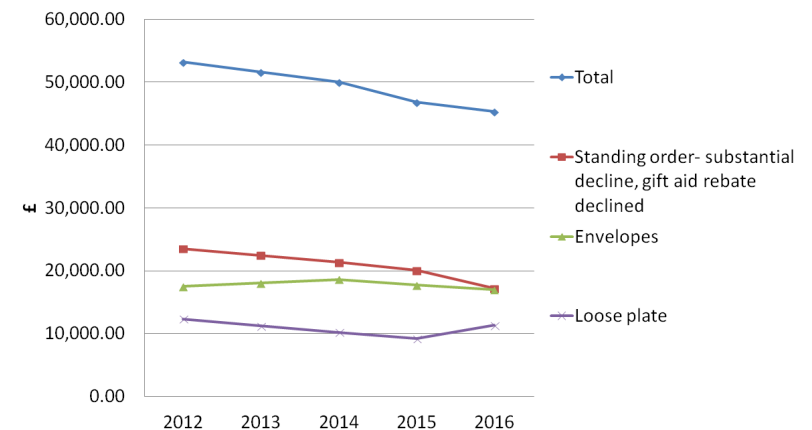
The meeting was attended by about 40 parishioners. Topics discussed were:

- The state of the parish finances
- The Our Mission Together appeal
- Children and Youth
- Some specific needs from those organising parish activities

The parish finances

The results for 2014-15 and 2015-16 show a small surplus in the parish reserves. However the financial analysis of the first 6 months of this year shows a break even position now; this will be monitored closely over the next 6 months to avoid a deficit. We are fortunate that the costs incurred over the past few years for the refurbishment of the community rooms, church and presbytery have been paid for, largely funded by a recent generous legacy donation. The parish reserves are reducing due to general unavoidable increases in expenditure, such as in heating, lighting, etc. There has also been a steady decrease in parish income over the past four years as shown in the total line below.

Offertory income 2012 - 2016



This reduction in parish income arises mainly from a lower level of standing order income, and this also reduces the extra amount received from reclaiming gift aid. Many individual standing order donations are still at their original amount, so if their financial situation allows maybe some parishioners could review their standing order amounts.