

CHAIRMANS REPORT – PARISH COUNCIL AGM – 21st June 2016

This report provides a summary of some of the work of the Parish Council over the past few months since the last AGM back in June last year. It will also look at some of the other events which have taken place which have provided a witness of Christ's work both within the Parish and the wider communities of Tolworth, Surbiton, and beyond.

The work of the Council is in part organizing things which don't fit within the remit of any other parish organization, and in part a consultative body for the Parish Priest to gain the opinion of a group of people which represent the wider community. I would like to thank the Council for their work throughout this past year and for their commitment to all that The Council has been involved with.

It has become apparent that the carpet in the church has reached the end of its life: it is rucked in many places, and is a trip hazard. This leaves us with two options going forwards: replace the carpet with a new one, or refurbish the wood block floor which is underneath and not replace the carpet. The Council is obtaining quotes with a view to taking the carpet up initially in one aisle to see what impact that has on noise and to gain the views from parishioners. Once the final decision is made, the carpet will either be replaced, or the whole nave returned to a refurbished wooden floor.

Comments have been made by several people that, when someone dies, just knowing their name is not always enough to identify who they are. People miss having a picture pinned up in the narthex which was previously undertaken by the Parish Office. In the absence of having such staff, and to try to fix this along with some other practical issues associated with having a funeral in the church (especially during term time), the Council is currently working on a leaflet which will be given to those notifying the parish of a death, and via this, they will be encouraged to provide a picture of the deceased for the above purpose.

The narthex remains a problem with regards to mess, and the noticeboards are a particular issue: they are cluttered, people attach anything they want to them, and there are too many of them in the first place. A review of this is taking place and in the autumn we hope to have new notice boards, which will be better organised, fewer of them, and properly managed to ensure only relevant and current information is displayed.

Just after Easter, we held our annual parish meal, which, as always, was an amazing success and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

The sub-committee of The Council tasked with raising funds for the Old Chapel and then seeing the building works through has worked extremely hard alongside that of the maintenance committee and we are grateful to all of them. Richard will mention more about this in his report, but we are all grateful to him and the committee for all their work whilst the Old Chapel was being re-furbished.

Our Stewardship Committee has organised a few things during the past year. Our Taize service in Unity Week was a huge success, although it could have been better supported. Coffee after Mass continues to develop, and the Parish Library is an amazing resource which we can all dip into. The committee, in its current form, has recently been disbanded whilst consideration is given to what format it should take going forwards.

In the last 6 years we have run two hugely successful pilgrimages to The Holy Land, and one to Rome and Assisi, and back in October, we visited Paris. This was an amazing place for a pilgrimage, and during the weekend, which blessed us with stunning weather, we held Mass and the Office daily, and visited the Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Chapel and Shrine of St Vincent de Paul, Notre Dame Cathedral and the Sacré-Cœur Basilica. We hope to continue this tradition next year by touring some of the sacred sites of Italy.

After the summer holidays, the Council will be assisting Fr Edward with organizing a parish census, followed by a survey of all parishioners on various aspects of the parish and parish life, later in the

autumn. The survey will give the Council items to get its teeth into, as it did in 2009 when we last carried out a survey of the whole parish.

The spiritual and prayer life of the parish is, and must remain centre to our existence as a Catholic. The liturgies this year have been carried out with much thought, grace and reverence by all involved.

The Sacramental Programs have been run well (although sometimes under trying circumstances), and our thanks must go to all of the catechists involved. The First Holy Communion Programme this year had 81 young people preparing to receive our Lord for the first time, there were 18 in the Confirmation course, and as always, it was a privilege for all present at the Easter Vigil, to witness the climax to the journey of the young lady who had been part of the RCIA program for the last few months.

Our young people are a very important part of parish life, so let us thank all those who work with our young people. The Children's Liturgy goes from strength to strength and we are grateful to all those who run this group. The leaders of the Junior Youth Club for those in school years 7 and 8 must be congratulated for all they do. Our primary school is not only an important asset to the parish as a whole, it is an integral part of the triad which is so vital to the passing on of the Faith to future generations: that of Church, Family and School. We wish the school, teachers, parents and children every success in all their ventures over the coming year. Our thoughts and prayers are especially with Tim at this time as he prepares for his retirement, so we wish him all the best for the time ahead, and thank him for all he has done within the school over many years.

Let us remember some of the many organisations in the parish who work tirelessly week in and week out for the good of our community: from those involved with the liturgies of the Church, the cleaners, flower arrangers, catechists, prayer groups, musicians, servers, welcomers, UCM, KSC, J&P, those working with the youth of the parish, the school, finance committees, maintenance committee, and everyone who helps in any way, large or small. OLI is a huge organisation, so we are grateful to everyone for their contribution. We must also pay tribute to all those who have been instrumental in raising money this year in the Lenten Project and for all those who ran, and supported, the various events. The SVP Group goes from strength to strength, along with that of the junior branch of the group.

Andrew Perks has given some 20 years service as Chair and Treasurer of the Finance Committee and is now stepping down so that someone else may take over the reins. We thank him for his many years of service to the parish, and wish his successor well.

We have many volunteers in our parish who take on many roles in order to make it tick. Whether a role takes many hours to fulfil, or a relatively short amount of time, it makes no difference: all are vital to the wellbeing, continuation, and indeed development of the parish as a stable community of, and for, the faithful. The good people who choose to give of their time do so voluntarily, and fit their work within the parish around employment, family life, children and so on: they work selflessly for the good of others, and we owe them all a massive vote of thanks for all that they do.

To conclude, I would like to offer our thanks and appreciation to all of our ordained ministers who support us in many ways: Fr Edward, Fr Brendan, Fr Chris and Deacon Al. We pray that the Lord will give them the strength in their ministries that, combined with the talents, time, ideas and prayers of all of us, we may build an even stronger community here in Tolworth for all of the faithful who make up this wonderful, vibrant, and diverse parish of ours.