

Parish Council Report 2014

Administration Report

– Mary Baldwin

The Parish Office continues to provide an effective service for the Parish and the Parish organisations, whilst acting as a point of contact for enquiries and information. As well as managing the day to day finances and communication with other organisations, the diocese and parishes the Office lets parishioners know what is going on via the weekly newsletter and the website.

The Financial well being of the parish is well managed and this year the Clergy Support Fund initiative was successfully carried out.

An increasing number of volunteers undertake tasks in the Parish office, so that the scope of the Parish office is continually extending.

Report for Catechesis

– Ossie Folkes

Catechists gather together each year to review, celebrate, renew and affirm our efforts.

A number of new catechists have joined the Sacramental Programmes, and some attended training in the Deanery.

This is good and sustains the vitality and enthusiasm of the catechesis. It also means that experience is shared and nurtured within the group so that there is plenty of succession planning in place. We continue to broaden the catechist base and encourage more inter participation across the parish groups.

The rotas for Baptism and Children's Liturgy have been renewed and updated giving the opportunity for many new and inexperienced people to be teamed up with more experienced Catechists. Catch-up sessions for older children who were above the usual age for those sacraments, were run for Baptism and First Communion. The Confirmation programme had a break during

2013/14 and restarted in 2014/15, the age has been raised and candidates now need to be Year 9 or above.

The Publication of *Evangelii Gaudium* has already had an impact on all that goes on

within the parish and will continue to do so across all the Catechetical programmes. The Evangelisation Conference called by Archbishop Peter in response to *Evangelii Gaudium* and the follow up day, was attended by members of the Parish Council.

Parish Catechists have attended training organised by the Deanery Catechetical formation team

Family Life and Marriage Report

– Rob Dunbar

Three sessions in Hartley Hall have taken place over the last year. The first was to an RCIA group using the ‘Home is a Holy Place’ DVD, followed by discussion with thought-provoking questions such as ‘What’s it like being in a family?’ ‘What does home mean to you?’ ‘Is your home a Holy place?’ ‘Are families Holy?’

The discussion focused on recognising the holiness in our home, developing the holiness in our home and celebrating the holiness in our home.

The second session, focused on the fact that home life wasn’t all about peace and quiet, and success, but very often involved sadness, tragedy, heartache and failure. It was moving to listen to older members of the Parish relate their grief and disappointment at such things as their children no longer attending Mass or practising the faith. We recognised that positive can come out of such negatives, particularly when the family and wider community rallies round and also that family and home means different things to different people.

The third and final session started by considering why we are thinking about Family and Home at this particular time. The breakdown of families, and the changing nature of home life, at a time when Pope Francis was considering the importance of family

life in the work of Evangelisation made our discussion very relevant. (The Synod of the Family was to take place in Rome),

At the end of this final session the group came up with practical suggestions that would assist the Parish in supporting Family Life and Marriage, focusing on things we should stop, things we could do better and things we could start to do. The matters raised were wide and far-reaching, such as Preparation for Marriage, Secondary School failings, Social Events, Mission to Catechise and Evangelise, Families at Mass, role of the Priest and Preparation of parents of children being baptised or going through First Communion/Confirmation. These points were presented to the Parish Council for them to consider their validity and possible use in the future.

Hartley Hall Report – Angela Allen

All user groups satisfied.

WiFi, parish laptop and projector now available. Table tops have been renewed; Purchase of new chairs under consideration

Need to add signage to encourage users to help maintain standards in the Hall.

Jack Petchey Award Scheme Report – Vicky DeMello

The Jack Petchey Achievement Award Scheme has enabled our community to recognise, reward and celebrate the achievements of young people in our community, (11-25). There are 3 awards a year; parishioners can nominate a young person who has: overcome personal adversity, helped them or others, supported and encouraged others, grown in confidence and showed dedication. The nomination is kept in the contact corner.

The Award Winners during 2014:

1. Kimberly Kong March 2014 – helping others and leading by example – Spent on Badminton courts at Haka sports centre.
2. Patrick O Sullivan June 2014 – outstanding committed member of the altar servers. Spent grant money on a party for the sick and elderly in Hartley Hall.
3. James Bruce-Quansah November 2014 –committing his time and talent to helping others. Spent grant money on Badminton Courts at the Bridge Leisure Centre.

The scheme is working well. Winners select the next award winner. Previous award winners came to mass and spoke about the Jack Petchey Scheme to inform the parish of what it is all about and to encourage them to make nominations and recognise the young people of our parish.

The badminton sessions have been well attended, and we still have some sessions left to use up during the half term and Easter Break.

The Jack Petchey Foundation also has a Leader Award, which has been designed for young people to thank and celebrate the adults who support them. Our young people have chosen to give this award to Judy Chen for her six years of dedicated service to the youth of Holy Cross Parish.

Liturgy Group Report

– Peter Louth

The liturgy of the church comprises the Mass, most days of the week, and also praying the Rosary, and the Divine Mercies during the week and Exposition and Benediction on Fridays.

The Saturday 6.30pm Mass works well with everyone's help, especially readers and Eucharistic ministers.

The music in the Sunday Liturgy is going well. Over the past three years musicians and cantors at both the 10.00am and 11.30am Masses have sourced or written music for the New English Translation and both congregations have responded well.

Occasionally we hold themed Masses, African, Asian, Caribbean; Youth and Seniors Masses.

A Holy Cross Song Book was introduced in August/September 2014 containing a dozen or more contemporary Hymns and Worship Songs, and these are sung frequently at the 10.00am Mass.

Special Ministers We continue to have a strong team of ministers who not only assist at Communion during the Mass but also play an important role in visiting the housebound and taking the Eucharist to them.

Readers We also have a good number of readers, though the Rotas' sometimes don't work as well as they should at the 6.30pm and 11.30am Masses.

From time to time 'training' or 'reflection' days are held for Readers and Eucharistic Ministers, some in conjunction with the Deanery.

Maintenance Report

– Susan Hooper

The replacements of the church kneelers were identified as a priority for 2014. Several quotes were obtained and Hayes and Finch won the contract to repair them. They were recovered and mended where necessary over a two week period in the summer.

The heating in the church is the next maintenance project and this will be looked at during 2015.

There were a few issues with the lighting system and these have been rectified

Mission Report

– Kath O'Sullivan

THE SVP continues to grow both in membership and people it helps

The leprosy project in Ghana received our pledged £4000 raised through the parish sponsored walk and a retiring collection. Two parishioners spent four weeks in Ahotokurom in the summer. A series of posters currently in Harley Hall record their experience. Over the coming months we'll hear and see more about this. This

year an information weekend, the parish sponsored walk and harvest supper should raise our pledged amount.

Pastoral Work

– Lesley Allen

The main priority of the pastoral work in the parish this year has focussed on the area of bereavement, supporting the dying and the bereaved.

10 people attended two excellent specialised training sessions at St Christopher's hospice in May followed by an in house training day back at the parish. A St Josephs team was formed whose aim is to link with those bereaved who need some extra support, ensure the bereaved are invited to a Remembrance Mass as well as keeping the bereaved and dead in the parishes prayers. The team can also offer pastoral support to the dying .

The parish has developed and strengthened their processes of visiting and there are currently 14 Special ministers who visit and or take Eucharist to the sick and housebound in their homes or in nursing homes. 36 People are currently receiving Holy Eucharist and another 15 receive outreach assistance. The parish are developing their SVP ministry and several new people have been recruited to address the areas of need and vulnerability .

A Deanery evening about the ministry of visiting was hosted by Holy Cross in October.

In July an anointing of the sick Mass was held followed by a tea party in Hartley Hall, approx. 50 people attended.

Opportunities for outreach are embraced, this year the Diamond Club held a creative exhibition which allowed the parish to show case their creative skills. There will be an Advent lunch for the older members and housebound of the parish on the 15th December. The Diamond club has provided a weekly programme of fun filled activities designed to keep minds and bodies active. There are 60 members and approx 50 who attend weekly. Several are from our neighbouring parishes which enhance deanery cohesion.

Wherever possible opportunities are sought to open up events for the whole parish which have included concerts, outings to the theatre as well as holidays and excursions.

Holy Cross School Report

– Mary Collins

Holy Cross Catholic Primary School celebrated its 40th birthday in January 2015. The school joined the Parish for Mass to give thanks for the determined work of Fr. Fagan, the founder of Holy Cross. Our Parish School continues to be successful in its education of the children of Catford. For the last three years we have been in the top three schools in the borough of Lewisham due to our SATS results. We are a highly over subscribed and a very happy school with supportive parents and wonderful children.

The children are taught about their faith and also how to live their faith in their daily lives. We gather each morning before the school day begins to pray a decade of the rosary, which is led by the children, and prayer continues to play an important part of our lives throughout each day. We are witnessing many children coming from increasingly deprived homes and are helping children and families as much as we can. Our connections with the Parish are extensive; Fr Doug celebrates Mass each year in all Key Stage two classes, he also celebrates the Infant Harvest Festival, Ash Wednesday Mass and Lenten and Advent Reconciliation Services for the children, two children serve at morning Mass each day, a class attends morning Mass each Tuesday, we enjoy precious connections with the fabulous Diamond Club who always come to school to be our first audience for the Nativity and Passion Plays during the year, hearing our younger children to read each week and inviting a group of the children each week to join them for conversation class – and sometimes a game of Bingo!

Our mission statement is the same as it was when Holy Cross opened forty years ago and is as relevant and beautiful now as it always was, “May God’s love shine in our lives as we care and share and learn together”.

Welcome Report

– Joe Baptiste

Evacuation procedure went well and was commended by the Fire Officer attending

New welcomers in place at 6.30 & 10.00am Masses

More welcomers needed for 11.30 Mass. We hope to expand the role of the Welcome Ministry and encourage younger people to become involved. The Coffee mornings after the 10am Mass on Sunday mornings extend the welcome parishioners feel and draw people together.

Youth and Confirmation Report

– Judy Chen

- Confirmation – whilst making the decision to raise the age of acceptance for the confirmation program to Year 9, the catechists took the opportunity to use the year to reflect and evaluate the program which has run for the last 2 years, revisit and reaffirm our objectives and update each individual session. We have recruited 3 new catechists so this provided an ideal opportunity for all to learn and improve our sessions. Changes include incorporating the service projects into the program proper, introducing the “Call” in January and updating individual sessions.
- Youth – We have undertaken two events in collaboration with 2 other parishes – St William of York and St. Philip Neri. We took a small group of young people to Aylesford Youth Festival as we do each year, joining with the 2 other parishes in sharing a coach which was donated by the Knights of Columba. Using a Jack Petchy award funds, we have organised another very successful Deanery Youth Christmas Disco attended by over 50 young people. Badminton sessions were also organised for the older youth of the parish throughout the summer and Christmas breaks which were very well attended. Coffee mornings continue once a month. Young people have been very active in the parish, continuing to participate in the band, the Youth choir, to read, cantor, serve and usher. Each year, 1-2 young people continue with their service project from Confirmation as they obviously enjoy the active participation.

STEWARDSHIP

For the past two years the Parish Council has been praying about and preparing preparing for Stewardship. There have been a number of meetings given over to developing the Council's understanding of Stewardship. Teresa Keogh the Diocesan Advisor met with the Parish Council in the Summer and there was a day of Reflection at the Convent Belmont Hill to help Parish Councillors discern gifts and talents as well as an appreciation of the spiritual benefits of Stewardship.

The Parish Council plan to introduce Stewardship during Lent 2015 by developing the stewardship of Prayer and recognising the gifts in our lives and so develop an "attitude for gratitude."

Some statistics

	2014	1994
Mass Attendance	800	640
Baptisms	45	38
Receptions into the Church	10	1
Confirmation	0	29
Marriages	8	21
