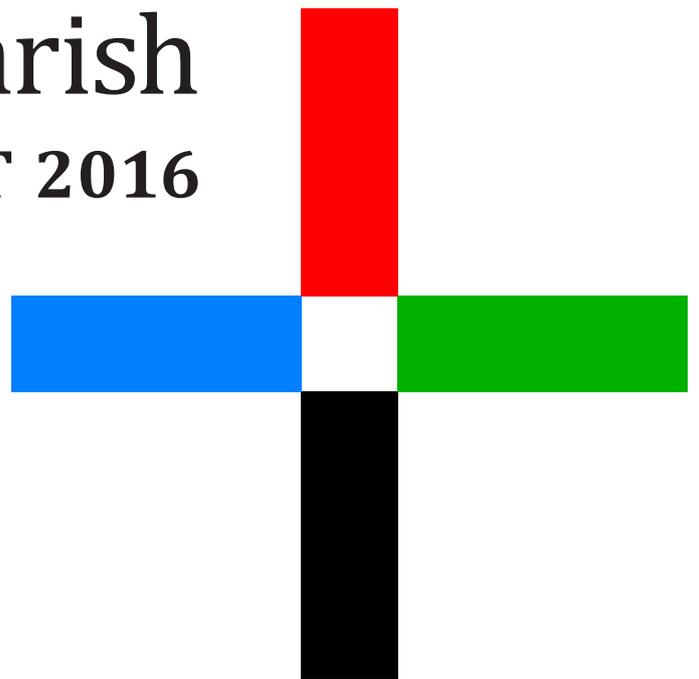


All Saints Parish
ANNUAL REPORT 2016



Just over a year ago our parish gathered to consider the outcome of the Parish Survey. After the reordering of Our Lady and St Patrick's Church, this was the first task assigned to the new Parish Pastoral Council. The survey set out to collect peoples views on all aspects of parish life and ran a 'health-check' on our community, reflecting upon whether we are fulfilling our Christian mission.

Much hard work was put into analysing the results from the survey, and it became clear that whilst we are indeed a vibrant and diverse community, we would need to begin to address some specific areas of concern that were common to many of the responses we received. These were focused and distilled under six headings or action points. The 'Big Six' are:

- HOW WE WELCOME
- CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER
- ENCOURAGING THE YOUNG
- HOW WE WORSHIP
- HOW WE GROW IN FAITH
- FUNDING THE MISSION.

It is important to point out that when you read the Catholic press, listen to the wider media or study the documents promulgated by the Holy See, you come to realise that these concerns are by no means unique to our community. The Parish Pastoral Council has nevertheless taken these matters to heart over the past year, and begun to tackle them with some determination. Significantly, it has used the Big Six to give structure and focus to the way the council is organised, and it constantly reflects upon them as it seeks to bring about the changes required.

+ HOW WE WELCOME

The new ministry of 'Welcomer' has been formed by personally inviting people to take part. It has been a great success, and as you attend Sunday Mass you will undoubtedly have noticed that you are greeted by different people each week. The consequence of this is that we are starting to know each other a little better and are becoming more aware of each others presence and general wellbeing. This is all part of a cultural shift, the need for which was highlighted in the Survey.

We have made a good start, but hopefully there is more to come. There are other things that the Welcoming Team can undertake and ideally it would be good to see many more parishioners participate.

As part of Welcoming we aimed to produce a Welcome Booklet, and this has now been published and is available at the three churches. It is intended specifically for those who are new to the parish or who are just visiting (and may become evangelists on our behalf!).

+ CARING FOR EACH OTHER

People who completed the survey were evidently concerned that we should develop a new approach to the way we care for each other. As we become more welcoming as a community, it seems likely that we will also be more aware of each others wellbeing. Whilst this is all to the good, it was also obvious that there was a need for a more formal and regulated structure whereby both those with concerns about another person, and those with a specific need, would have somewhere to turn to.

In common with many other parishes we decided that the way forward would be to form a section (or 'conference') of the SVP. The St Vincent de Paul Society (or as it is often known - the SVP) is an international Christian voluntary organisation dedicated to tackling poverty and disadvantage by providing practical assistance to those in need – irrespective of ideology, faith, ethnicity, age or gender. By its very nature a large amount of its work will be 'below the radar' so-to-speak, but as the conference evolves it will also develop a more visible presence, so that people know more readily where to turn.

+ ENCOURAGING THE YOUNG

In some ways this is perhaps the most challenging area that we are seeking to develop. You don't have to be a member of our parish or indeed the wider Christian community, to know that in our predominantly secular society, and within the prevailing culture at large, it is harder than ever to attract young people to our faith and to encourage them to become, and more importantly remain, active participants in the Catholic community.

In common with the rest of the Big Six, our approach has been to start simply and build from there. Accordingly and after much discussion the first thing we did was to gather our young people together to talk about what they want and need from the parish. There was some debate about the varying needs of different age-groups, but one clear outcome was the evident need to build social cohesion; our young people wanted to do things together, to have fun and enjoy each others company, as well as practice their faith, and we felt that doing this would build friendship and help them identify and connect with the wider group.

While there are already some fantastic events organised for families to attend, Treyarnon and Wintershall spring to mind, the newly formed Youth and Young Adults Committee are trying to focus specifically upon events and activities for their target audience. We have now had the fantastic Bubble Football event, there is a possible Year of Mercy Youth Pilgrimage in the offing, the Diocesan Youth Rally etc. etc, and the parish has already booked 20 places for 'Flame', the biggest Catholic youth event in the UK, taking place in March next year at Wembley Arena. Places will primarily be for those being confirmed in 2017.

The Youth and Young Adults Committee is just getting going, but there are already plans to do more and we can look forward optimistically to these bearing fruit.

+ HOW WE WORSHIP

In late September we bade farewell to Fr Jonathan and gave a big welcome to Fr Mark as our new Parish Priest. This process has meant change for us, but must also have presented a huge upheaval for our outgoing and incoming priests. We only have to imagine for ourselves how it would be to move not only to a new location and home, but a new job so-to-speak, new work colleagues, a new place of worship, and then a whole new community to begin afresh to engage with, to realise how daunting this might be.

Fr Mark's formal Induction Mass took place at the beginning of December, by which time we were well into Advent. After Christmastide, Lent and Easter loomed up with alarming rapidity this year and it seems only recently that we have switched again back into Ordinary Time. Alongside the reordering this period of change means we are also inevitably adapting to new and different ways of celebrating the Liturgy.

After this initial phase of evolution and re-engagement, a newly formed Liturgy Group is now meeting to consider more deeply how we can enhance and improve our experience at Mass. Fr Mark is very keen that the different elements of the Mass should flow into each other naturally, without abrupt changes or prolonged pauses, and amongst other things the Liturgy Group will be addressing this, alongside looking towards the provision of ongoing training for Altar Servers, Ministers of the Word and Eucharistic Ministers.

+ HOW WE GROW IN FAITH

Again in this area we have to consider the fact that we have been through a period of significant change and also dislocation, as we now settle back into familiar places and routines after the reordering of Our Lady and St Patrick's Church. Subsequently, of course, we had a change of parish priest. In response to the New Evangelisation, the Diocese has been encouraging all parishes to get involved in a new programme asking us to reflect anew upon our own personal faith with a view to becoming 'Intentional Disciples'. These workshops are still underway in the parish, and there is still time and opportunity to participate.

In the survey responses we received, a frequent question asked was "could we please publish an annual calendar both of liturgical events and also forthcoming talks, group meetings etc. not only in the parish, but also the Diocese and further afield". This would enable us to become aware of things happening well in advance and know where to go to find this information.

+ ALLSAINTSTEIGNMOUTH.ORG.UK

Since April of last year the parish has had it's own website which can be accessed by going to the above URL. The website has around fifteen to twenty unique visitors a day and at peak times in the liturgical year has been visited by as many as 120 people per day. These visits come not only from local parishioners, but from further afield. Quite a few are from the bigger conurbations in the UK and even other countries such as the USA and even more unlikely locations. Perhaps these are the relatives of people in the parish – who knows?

The website is first and foremost somewhere where we can celebrate recent events, such as the Parish Picnic, First Holy Communion, the Treyarnon visit or, or find a link to a BBC Radio Devon programme where children from Our Lady & St Patrick's School tell radio listeners about what prayer means to them. There is also information about forthcoming events, you can read the latest newsletter (or find past issues), find out Mass times or the location of our three churches.

More recently a Parish Calendar has also been available on the site at:

allsaintsteignmouth.org.uk/calendar/

This online calendar aims to answer the need expressed in the survey, and be a comprehensive schedule of not only parish events, meetings and activities both large and small, but of relevant things happening in the wider arena. Anyone can access the site to check the calendar. It is often argued that some do not have internet access (though not usually by those who are supposedly without), so the Parish Newsletter also lists upcoming events.

+ FUNDING THE MISSION

Before tackling this subject, on behalf of the PPC, I would like to give a huge vote of thanks to those who were so deeply involved in the reordering of our parish church. Firstly of course to Fr Jonathan Stewart whose vision and tenacity brought the project to fruition, but also remembering to give particular thanks to John Cunningham, who has now stepped down from active involvement and also to Raymond Twohig who has bravely re-volunteered to be the steward of our parish finances in his new role as chair of the newly re-constituted Finance Committee. The particular expertise knowledge and sheer hard work freely given by these two stoic individuals, has carried us a long way forward.

Fulfilling the initial objectives post-survey, we have a new and strengthened Finance committee, and an ongoing financial assessment subsequent to the reordering project is taking place. Notwithstanding the sense that the reordering project is almost complete, buildings will continue to be a major preoccupation and challenge for us as a parish. To focus specifically upon these concerns we now have a separate Buildings Committee. Like all the other groups we have so far mentioned, this committee is composed entirely of volunteers, who are finding themselves undertaking a substantial amount of work on our behalf.

One of the main initial tasks for Finance and Buildings has been the assessment of our current financial position and to responsibly estimate future costs that we are likely to incur. Only by doing this can we accurately understand what our required budget will be over the medium to long term.

While we may be able to form a reasonably accurate picture of our general running costs, other expenses are more difficult to assess. It is likely that initiatives we have undertaken in response to the Big Six survey outcomes will involve us in some small additional expenses and we have determined that we will set a specific budget for many of these once these new groups and committees have been up and running for a year. What is becoming increasingly obvious though, is that these expenses are likely to be completely overshadowed by the amount of money we are going to have to spend on our buildings.

To get an accurate picture of this we commissioned professionally conducted surveys of all three churches and their ancillary buildings. These looked at works that need doing urgently, within the next year, in two-to-five years, and in a five-to-ten year timeframe.

The outcome of this initial assessment is that we expect to be facing some sizeable bills over the next ten years in the region of £300,000. Apart from these planned outgoings, recent un-planned for events mean we are likely to shortly incur some large and significant repair and renovation costs.

The root problem we have to face up to as a parish, is that our income barely covers our day-to-day running costs. The funding we receive (contrary to popular belief) comes from only two sources. Firstly the majority comes from the money given by parishioners throughout the year, around £75,000, and secondly we receive some income from investments. The income from these will be around £14,000 this year, and the investments themselves amount to around £400,000, although we will be taking a sizeable chunk from these to pay for the urgent repairs that we now find we have to make.

One might argue that we should continue to draw on this capital to pay for the upkeep of our buildings, but the PPC firmly takes the view that this would be short-sighted and ultimately irresponsible. This capital derives from other properties that we have previously taken the hard decision to let go in order to consolidate and restructure our community. A big concern is that despite our best efforts, it is not unlikely that alongside anticipated costs, other unforeseen expenses may again materialise. This unwelcome scenario may force us again to think about our commitment to all our buildings.

This pressing dilemma presents a major challenge not only to the Parish Pastoral Council but to the parish as a whole, and I hope and pray that we as people of faith, in community as part of the Body of Christ, may find the collective wisdom and foresight to make the right decisions. The PPC, Finance and Buildings, under the guidance of our Parish Priest, will be urgently seeking to determine practical ways in which we can build a sustainable future.

In conclusion and on a personal note, I would have to say that paradoxically I feel positive despite these worries. The new ventures that we have set in process to take the concerns raised in the parish survey forward have started well, and I believe they have the momentum needed to carry them forward. In some ways these are at the heart of what we do and who we are as a parish, and buildings should take second place. However, next year finance will be a major focus for us, and inevitably it will be a topic for debate.

We must pray that the Holy Spirit will guide our decisions well and that we can resolve these difficulties together and move our parish steadily but determinedly forward.

Finally, I would like to thank Fr Mark for his good stewardship and guidance. It is then also important to thank all those who serve on our committees, all those who do the multitude of selfless and unseen tasks that are so essential to our communal wellbeing (you know who you are!) and finally every last but vital member of our community. No wonder that this parish is called ALL SAINTS!

God Bless.

Simon Fletcher

Chair of the Parish Pastoral Council

