**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Pastoral Council Chair’s Report July 2019**

On behalf of both PPC and parish, may I thank our clergy team – Fr John, our Deacons Peter, Declan and Nick - for their selfless service, pastoral care, wise guidance and inspirational leadership over the past year. When we moved to Poole in 1986 there were usually three priests in residence at St Mary’s and one at St Anthony’s. The need for lay support is greater than ever to ensure that the clergy can focus on what only they can do. The role of the PPC is to identify and nurture that support.

In the PPC we have continued the work first laid out at The Gathering in 2017

* building and restoring links between us and beyond
* increasing participation in parish life
* enhancing our faith, worship and prayer
* attracting and holding on to young people

In particular our parish development day in January, inspirationally led by David Wells, gave a further opportunity to seek and reflect on parishioners views.

**Building and restoring links between us and beyond : “From congregation to community”**

In addition to our involvement in Churches Together where Deacon Nick is secretary, we have established sound links with St George’s CofE and Longfleet Baptist Churches. These led to an Advent Celtic Evening Worship and joint organisation of the annual ecumenical service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – very well supported by our parishioners.

Our two Welcoming the Stranger evenings in March attracted over one hundred participants each, drawn from not just different Christian denominations but from other faiths or none, all bound by a deep care for refugees and asylum seekers.

We continue to be frustrated by the slow roll-out of GDPR guidance – currently undergoing trialling here and elsewhere, to date not very successfully. This makes it difficult to follow up individuals and families who may have drifted away. In addition to the existing group activities, it has been particularly encouraging to see the number of home groups grow to five, and the Dad’s group flourishing. Given the pastoral demands on clergy it should remain our ambition to build care chains between parishioners.

**Increasing participation in parish life**

The past year has seen fewer social events than 2017-18, in part because we have still to find a PPC social rep. The Evangelisation Team followed through on its resolve to open and staff the church during such events to encourage visitors to experience the peace therein and made a series of Welcome cards for such occasions. We have yet to establish parallel committees to oversee care, ecumenical outreach and communications - our difficulties in recruiting volunteers continue.

However, the PPC’s resolution to lead on faith formation has meant that after a second Alpha course the Easter to Pentecost and current Joy of Hope courses have enabled some 35 parishioners to get to know each other in a more profound way. Each Friday I marvel that between 60 and 70 people attend midday Mass – a number many churches would be pleased to see on a Sunday, graciously supplementing and supporting family members at funerals, and enjoying fellowship over Hunger Lunch afterwards. The challenge is to encourage more of the 600+ attendees at weekly Mass to connect more widely with the life of the church.

**Enhancing our faith, worship and prayer**

As well as Alpha which ran January to March with 30 participants, E2P and Joy of Hope referred to above, we had a great weekend with Jo Boyce – her concert, workshop and worship lead were inspirational.

The Easter Triduum was once again wonderfully uplifting, as were the series of First Holy Communion and Confirmation Masses. Whilst indebted to our current musicians, the PPC would echo Bel McConville’s appeal for more!

Many of the discussions in the courses held acknowledge that faith formation needs to be lifelong and beyond the central role of weekly Mass. Plans are afoot for a monthly catechetical programme for young people, which the Tuesdays@St Mary’s programme could parallel for adults.

**Attracting and holding on to young people**

The quest to appoint a Youth Worker has been frustrating to date but we are optimistic that we shall have a person in post this autumn. The youth committee is clear that to be effective the individual appointed must be fully supported by parishioners in this challenging role. Our “parish net” has yet to be sufficiently tightly woven to hold onto the young fish swimming through our waters!

**Conclusion**

I end as I did last year...’With the significant challenges we face as a parish and a Christian church, and with the tremendous gifts and potential we possess here in St Mary’s and Poole, we need as a PPC to learn from successful practice elsewhere and to plan strategically for how best to use our time talents and treasure in the years ahead’.

Andrew Williams

Chair of St Mary’s Pastoral Council

July 2019

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Archconfraternity of St. Stephen for Altar Servers**

The Archconfraternity is a society for those who wish to do things together within a parish by being an Altar Server. A simpler word would be – Guild - one that had been given special powers by the Church in Rome with special privileges and facilities and because it is an Archconfraternity it can allow other guilds to share in those privileges and facilities.

The objectives of the Guild of St. Stephen are:-

1 To encourage the highest standards of serving at the Church’s liturgies and by doing so contribute to the whole community’s participation in a more fruitful worship of God.

2 Provide altar servers with a greater understanding of what they are doing and why – so that they may serve with increasing reverence and prayerfulness.

3 Unite servers of different parishes and dioceses for their mutual support and encouragement.

The Archbishop of Westminster is the Superior General of the Guild which is run by a Central Lay Council and each Diocesan Bishop appoints a Priest Director for his own Dioceses. In the case of Plymouth Diocese this is Canon Michael Lock.

In Poole the Guild was established around 1948 and has remained active in their ‘service’ ever since with the full support of the Parish Priests and Deacons together with the parents and friends of the servers and the whole congregation. The servers are very grateful for this support.

After several weeks of training new servers commence their ministry and are enrolled into the Guild. After 10 years the Silver Medal is awarded and after 50 year a Gold medal is awarded.

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Poole Circle of the The Catenians :**

Strengthening Family life through friendship,

The Catenian Association is an international organisation of catholic laymen which supports it members and their families by shared values, especially their Catholic faith. Catenianism is based on the practice of perfect charity whence flows all that is noble in men and women alike. In the early 20th century there were fewer than 2 million Catholics in England and The Bishop of Salford, Louis Casartelli –formed an organisation known as The Chums. Two years later it became the Catenian Association taking the new title from the Latin word for chain: Catena. Today there are approaching 10000 members around the world who meet as ‘circles.’ There are nearly 400 Circles in Great Britain with 8000 members and other Circles in Ireland, Africa, Australia, India, Malta, Dhaka, Nazareth and Palestine. Members’ wives and families are an important part of the Association and it is often said that while the men are the Catenians – the wives and families are the Association.

The country is divided into Provinces. Poole is part of Province 11 which covers Dorset, Hampshire and parts of Surrey and Wiltshire. Circles meet every month and support many activities within the church. An important activity is through the Bursary Fund which helps young people by providing financial assistance to these who wish to volunteer for a ‘charitable’ project such as assisting on visits to Lourdes or in underdeveloped villages or countries overseas. Each year individual Circles will support a local charity of their choice. It maintains a benevolent fund to provide help and assistance for its members, their families and the wider catholic community. Last year over £110,000 was donated. A ‘Youth Speaks’ competition is promoted every year.

Throughout the country there is involvement in diocesan ministry of charity through Caritas and the Catenian Association is a co-promoter of ‘flame’ – an event for 9000 young people which is held at Wembley Arena – and is part of a long tradition of supporting young people.

One important area of support is that of Vocation to the Religious Life. This was promulgated by Poole Circle some 30 years ago. Help is given to every diocese and special masses for Vocations are arranged by each Circle.

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Dads’ Group**

We have a regular bunch of dads of about 8. We have a few more on the invite list, but intend to widen the invites to the First Holy Communion and Confirmation parents (GDPR permitting).

We're due another gathering in the next few weeks. We aim to meet every 8 to 10 weeks on the Quay.

We are forming a good bond and hope this grows.

We're grateful to Fr John and Deacon Nick for their support.

Interested? Please contact Robin Watson rrpwatson@yahoo.co.uk

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**St Mary’s Homegroups**

We now have five home groups with offers to host another possible three!

**Homegroup 1 : Alison Appleton**

There are 11 people in the group and we meet twice a month on a Monday evening for about 90 minutes. We study passages from the Bible usually using a study guide, have a cup of tea/coffee and then finish with a short prayer session.

In September 2018 we started reading the book ‘Rediscover Jesus’ by Matthew Kelly which was given to all parishes in the Portsmouth Diocese Christmas’17. The members of the group read the next 2 chapters before the meeting, then at the meeting we read them aloud with comments and thoughts from the members.

During Lent this year we met each week and studied the same publication as the ecumenical Lent groups in the Broadstone area. It was a Cover to Cover series booklet entitled Meekness and Majesty written by Elizabeth Rundle.

Anybody interested in joining our group please contact Alison on 01202 676350 or email: alison@appletonpoole.co.uk

**Homegroup 2 : Catriona and Paul Chandler**

We meet on alternate Tuesday's at 7.45 pm for a 8pm start, finishing at 9.30pm.

We start by listening to some worship music, such as Hillsong or other worship songs. We then have prayer / individual prayer intentions and say the rosary.

At present we are working our way through reading the Psalms, currently up to Psalm 55. Each evening is ended with a Saint of the Day. In between home groups we will text / email each other with support, prayer requests etc.

Within the group ages vary from 30 to 70, male and female, singles and two married couples, and we are happy for more people to join us.

Come and speak to Paul and me after church on a Sunday or we can be contacted through the Parish Office.

**Homegroup 3 : Renny Gye and John Gateley**

The home group which was formed from Table Four (plus additions) from the first Alpha course has continued to meet roughly every month. We have nine members and have discussed a variety of topics, including religious and secular music, attending church in other places and some theological and social issues led by videos from the Dominicans in Oxford. We are enjoying learning more about each other and sometimes sharing our struggles.

**Homegroup 4 : Judith and Andrew Williams**

We have had some great meetings this year with sometimes 14, but usually eight or nine. Among other topics we have covered the Creeds, the meaning of the Cross, the Resurrection, and evil and the Devil. As one participant said “Who would have thought religion could be such fun!”

Contact: andrewwilliams1150@gmail.com 01202460162

**Homegroup 5 : Bible Study Group**

After the second Alpha course, a Bible study group has been set up, meeting fortnightly. We are currently studying Luke’s Gospel, with the help of Bishop Tom Wright’s study notes and questions, and with his excellent book, Luke for Everyone, as a guide for the leader. We start with coffee/tea and biscuits and a time of chatting and getting to know each other and we end with prayer and possibly a short meditation. Coordinator : Renny Gye

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Joint Parishes Evangelisation Team – report to St Mary’s Parish AGM**

**July 2019**

Our role in the diocesan evangelisation initiative began here in summer 2016 with two groups exploring the challenges posed by Sherry Weddell’s book “Forming Intentional Disciples”. This provided the title for what is now, in line with diocesan practice, our “Parishes Evangelisation Team” (PET).

We meet monthly, with the aims : ”through prayer and growing with each other in faith...

a. to be inspired to reach out together within our parishes so that all, individuals and groups, may perceive the need for evangelisation

b. to take opportunities in the Liturgical Calendar/what is happening locally to create special moments of outreach to those who need a helping hand, the lapsed, other Christian churches and the unchurched.”

Representatives attended Bishop Mark’s day of reflection for PET members held at Buckfast Abbey in November, and learned usefully of the range of initiatives around the diocese.

We ran a second Alpha course in Spring this year, with a total (including the team) of 30 participants. Although this was disappointingly only half the number of the previous year, the eleven weekly sessions and awayday were greatly appreciated by all and truly transformational for some. Once again we were indebted to our hugely generous and heroic caterers! With offers of four new home groups, one has already started.

Next steps

Many of the participants continued Tuesdays@St Mary’s through the Welcome the Stranger, Easter to Pentecost and Joy of Hope programmes. We hope that our PET will grow in numbers as well as initiative as a result.

Here as well as elsewhere the challenge is to inspire all our fellow parishioners to explore and embrace what is meant by “simple evangelism”, for each individual to know and accept that each of us is called and gifted for the task, and that the Holy Spirit will provide the opportunities and what we need to be effective.

Andrew Williams

July 2019

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**St. Mary’s Justice and Peace**

**Peace Sunday 20th January:**

This year’s theme for Peace Sunday “Good Politics Serves Peace” as with last year we supported Pax Christi by distributing prayer cards after Mass , also bidding prayers was said. This was done also at St. Anthony’s. The parish very kindly gave a donation to Pax Christi for their work in promoting peace.

“……Every citizen bears political responsibility, and in particular those who have received the mandate to protect and govern. This mission consists of safeguarding the law and encouraging dialogue between figures of society, among generations and among cultures. There is no peace without mutual trust. And trust has as a first condition respect for the given word. Political commitment – which is one of the highest expressions of charity – involves concern for the future of life and the planet, the youngest and smallest, and their thirst for fulfilment…….”

Pope Francis World Day for Peace 2019.

**Current Organisations we are affiliated to :**

Pax Christi : We continue to support the work of Pax Christi. Justpeace Journal £50.00 pa

Campaign Against the Arms Trade: We are in receipt of regular magazines CAAT NEWS /Justice and Peace network. £50.00 pa donation to cover costs and postage.

Columban Missions: Vocation for Justice £50.00 pa donation to cover costs and postage.

Freedom from Torture : Magazine + online access £50.00 pa donation to cover costs and postage.

**Events 2019**

Laudato Si : Meeting Saturday 29th June - St. Mary’s Church Hall. I would like to thank the Cafod team for their support. We are hoping for some feed back from the meeting, and possible action after the summer break. At the moment the ‘Laudato Si’ programme has been sponsored by CAFOD and Justice and Peace at Diocesan level. The meeting on the 29th was the official launch.

Report: https://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/careforourcommonhomereflection/

Caritas : A new initative by Bishop Mark, Launched May 18th 2019, Exeter.

Mission : Caritas Plymouth shares in the mission of the Catholic Church.

“ We support the network of social action charities, schools and parishes within the Diocese of Plymouth, working in partnership with them to help poor, vulnerable and marginalised people”

Website: https://www.caritasplymouth.org.uk

I would like to take this opportunity to thank St. Mary’s for their continued support for Justice and Peace .

Chris Rocha

St. Mary’s Justice and Peace

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**St Mary’s Rosary Circle**

The Rosary Circle continues to flourish with an additional 12 new members joining over the past year bringing the total membership to 90 plus.

Primarily members of the Circle choose to pray one set of Rosary mysteries, at least once per week or more, on a day and a place of their choice, so it is easy to be a member.

On Sundays, a core subset of the Circle prays the Rosary as a group at 9 a.m. before Mass in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Additionally this year Marina, one of the group members who assists Declan in Poole Hospital Chaplaincy, has been providing sick patients with rosaries and meditation cards, following their requests, to help them cope with their illness by rediscovering the power of prayer.

**St. Mary’s Healing Prayer Group**

The Healing Prayer Group continues unobtrusively in the background of the parish, to provide confidential daily prayer for members of the parish that are sick, or who are experiencing difficulties in life.

The prayer group comprises of 15 members, who offer prayer daily for those who have requested prayers and meet as a group on a monthly basis, for a time of prayer and praise, during which time each sick person is raised up to God to ask for healing.

Throughout the year there have been many blessings in both mind and body for those on the prayer list for whom we pray.

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**The St. Mary’s Rambling group**

We have had a few new people joining our group of walkers this year but also a few of our members are not able to walk with us due to infirmity. Although there are usually a few of the ‘no longer walking members’ who meet us at the pub for a meal and chat, which we all enjoy. We have added a few new walks to our list this year and stuck to some old favourites as well.

We  meet in the church car park every Tuesday morning to travel in as few cars as possible to our start venue. Details of each walk are sent by email to all members on a Sunday evening, so they can decide if the walk is suitable for them. We always stop at a pub or tea rooms for lunch. The group has about 25 members with usually about 8 to 16 on any walk.

As we walk in all weathers walking boots or stout shoes are best as there are usually quite a lot of muddy areas during the winter, but trainers are alright in hot weather, not sandals though.

We cover a large area and with about 50 walks a year you can see a lot of Dorset countryside if you come walking with the St. Mary’s Ramblers.

If you would like to join us contact Alison on 01202 676350 or email: alison@appletonpoole.co.uk

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Refugee Support Group**

In November we organised a successful Safe Passage deputation to Poole Council to ask them to take at least 3 refugees a year over next 10 years. This was brought to completion this month with a deputation to the new Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council and a unanimous decision to support the initiative.

In March we organised two successful events.

 **‘Welcome the stranger’** evening with International Care Network, City of Sanctuary, Gardens of Sanctuary and the Churches Together in Poole refugee coordinator, attended by over 80 people.

**‘From Syria To Sanctuary’** A young refugee AbdulazezDukhan spoke about his experiences (co-hosted by Unity in Vision) with 120 people attending.

**With Churches Together in Poole**

 In December the money raised at our Celtic Evening Worship at St Marys – an ecumenical event with St George’s and Longfleet Baptist – went towards the CTiP Refugee Co-ordinator salary

In January the Churches Together United Service raised money in support of the Refugee Coordinator.

(St Marys generously donated £500 last year to her salary but the need is still there for this year.)

**The Women’s Conversation Group** in support of our local refugees is attended by some parishioners

**On-going needs and Aims**

St Marys to become a Church of Sanctuary

Compassionate landlords are STILL urgently being sought to house refugee families

Foster Carers are needed for the Safe Passage ‘our Turn’ scheme.

St Marys need to contribute again to the refugee support workers salary

For more information contact Judith Williams andwilliams@ntlworld.com 01202 460162

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**SVP Report, 2018 – 2019**

St Mary’s SVP continue to meet regularly for prayer and to share concerns. We are now a group of 18 members, with Deacon Peter as our Spiritual Advisor.

We visit and provide help and support in many ways for parishioners and others in need. This has included lifts to appointments, help with shopping and gardening, providing essentials for a few families and an SVP caravan holiday for a needy family.

Our Seniors’ Tea and Chat afternoon has been very successful with up to 40 people attending monthly for company, refreshments and some form of activity. We have had outings to both Swanage and Branksome Dene and also booked a trip on the Dolphin Boats for a few of those with limited mobility.

In January we started a monthly Games afternoon on a Friday after Hunger Lunch but will now have a break during the school holidays.

There is a group of Mini Vinnies at St Mary’s school who share the Vincentian values and there was recently a Festival Day held at St Mary’s for Mini Vinnies from a number of Catholic schools in the area.

This year we have sponsored 6 schoolchildren in India and also provided financial support for 4 SVP Conferences in India to help with their work among the really poor.

Members also help with Soup Run, Food Bank and Apostleship of the Sea.

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Teams (Equipes Notre Dame) Report, 2019**

Teams is an international Christian organisation for married couples, meeting monthly for prayer, discussion and support.

We have two Teams in Poole, each with 4 – 6 couples and a chaplain and there are other teams locally in Wimborne, Westbourne and Bournemouth.

We meet in each other’s homes to share a simple meal over which we talk about our personal “highs and lows” of the last month, followed by prayer and the discussion of a topic, article or book relating to our faith.

In January, Poole 1 Team enjoyed a weekend retreat together at Sway and in November some of us will attend the Diamond Jubilee of Teams, celebrating 60 years of Teams in Great Britain, with Mass at Westminster Cathedral followed by a reception in the Cathedral Hall.

New couples are always welcome to join and we would love to start a new Team in the parish!

**St Mary’s AGM 2019**

 **– Report on work in Poole of the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris – “Star of the Sea” , the name we are known by among seafarers and which is to be adopted as the official name in the near future) –** from David Chamberlain)

The **Apostleship of the Sea** [AoS] has a team of three ship visitors in the Port of Poole (Angela, Alf & David). While they represent the Catholic Church in its mission to seafarers, they very much consider they represent St. Mary’s and our brothers and sisters at St. Anthony’s in their work in welcoming the seafarers on the vessels that come into Poole; welcoming all in Christ’s name regardless of race, nationality or religion. Many seafarers are Catholic, a great number are from the Philippines, and really appreciate the contact with their Faith, many knowing AoS as “Stella Maris” (Star of the Sea), – and, thus,very especially connected with our Diocese and Parish. Currently Alf has been undertaking the majority of ship visits in recent months as we are twinning our visiting activities with the Anglican Missions to Seafarers in Poole. To illustrate something of the work done in addition to ship visiting, we reported last year on the work we undertook to support a young man from Ghana who had been rescued from slavery on a fishing vessel in a south coast port and who had been placed in a “safe house” in Bournemouth. We are pleased to be able to report that following a lot of support by the Poole Team, and hard work by the full time Chaplain for the Southern Ports (Shoreham to Portland), working closely with the Mission to Fishermen, he was found work on a fishing vessel with a good employer and he has been able to return home for a holiday with his family. He still keeps in touch.

**ST. MARY’S PARISH AGM**

**Children and Young People**

Our sacramental programs have continued with success this year with 54 children making their first holy communion and 30 Young people being confirmed.  We introduced a new First Holy Communion course this year which is more Bible based and while there were inevitably some minor problems the course was successful

Children’s liturgy for the over 5’s has continued throughout the year with 30+ children attending most Sundays. However we have had to stop the under 5’s liturgy due to a lack of adult support

Successful children’s masses have been held for Harvest Festival, Gaudate  Sunday and  Mothering Sunday and we hope in the future that we may do these masses a little more frequently

We recognise however that we need to do more to follow up on the sacramental program to encourage children and young people to grow in their faith and with this in mind we hope to launch a new program in the autumn

We have for the last few months been seeking to recruit a new youth worker  and following interviews  on Thursday, the 18th of July we have a suitable candidate who we hope will commence work on the 1st of September