

St Michael's Parish Pastoral Council AGM

29th September 2024

This AGM report shares some of the highlights of our rich and diverse parish life covering spiritual and social activities as well as some of our achievements within the last year.

We may be a small parish, but our achievements are not small. The level of enthusiasm displayed by the parishioners to help out, get involved, and come together as a community is exemplary. Our calendar is filled with events that help us deepen our faith, socialise, and help others. In March, we had a prayer retreat, we also had Bible talks and Prayer for the Christian Community. 11 young parishioners received First Communion this year - a big thank you goes to Debra and everyone who supported children through their prayers and practical help. 15 parishioners received the Sacrament of Confirmation. We have regular Family and Youth masses. We also have an annual Anointing of the Sick Mass and let's not forget a celebration of diversity within our parish - the International Mass and lunch organised by Yvonne.

Social events included the annual highlight of pre-Christmas activities which is the Christmas pudding making evening, this was followed by a quiz night with a fish and chips supper superbly organised by Sue and her grandson, a family games event attended by 50 parishioners and a safari supper organised jointly with other local churches. This is a very special year for big anniversaries as in April we celebrated Fr Michael's 30th Anniversary and in July Deacon Brian's 10th Anniversary. Congratulations to both Fr Michael and Deacon Brian for reaching these significant anniversaries.

We do not just focus on ourselves. We actively help people outside of our community. We have supported many fundraising appeals by donating money, clothes, food and toiletries to various charities including CAFOD, SmartWorks and CIRDIC. We've also supported the local food bank.

Since our last AGM, the Thoughtful Living Group has organised three big fundraising events - "Santa Doesn't Always Get It Right" raffle, a plant and books sale and a craft and produce sale. We've raised over £2k for charities including Reading Refugees Charity and CIRDIC. Thank you for your big heart and incredible generosity, particularly given the challenging times we live in!

Our calendars are already filled with events planned for the next few months. In October, we will have two special masses, a couple of social and fundraising events ("Thoughtful Christmas Craft" evening and a Charity Board Games Event to fundraise for the Missing People charity) and a walk to raise money for Reading Refugees.

The Thoughtful Living Group chaired by Mary has not only organised fundraising events but also helps us live in a more sustainable and less wasteful way. We have tetracycline bins, we took part in the Thames clean up, and held a Thoughtful Christmas event which included a Christmas cards exchange. The group's achievements were recognised by CAFOD as after a rigorous assessment process, we were given the LiveSimply Award. This award is given to communities which can show that they follow Pope Francis's message of living simply, sustainably with creation and in solidarity with people living in poverty. This is an enormous achievement, particularly given the size of our parish!

We have many other groups which contribute to the smooth running of the parish. Our church is beautifully decorated by our flower arranging group and our green fingered parishioners help us maintain the church grounds. The money counters, readers, welcomers, altar servers, parishioners who visit the housebound to offer holy communion and companionship, the cleaning group and other groups all help our parish thrive and we are grateful for your help. A special thank you goes to our choir for helping us pray through hymns and organising the candle lit Christmas carols service.

As a parish, we have links with a wider community. Deacon Brian and Fr Michael visit the local residential homes and housebound parishioners. We have close links with other Christian churches in our area and jointly co-ordinate events such as the Prayer for Christian Community and the safari supper.

We have a lot to be proud of. We are a strong, vibrant and loving community and these qualities will help us move forward. As you know, Fr Michael has recently celebrated his 80th birthday. We are very lucky and very grateful to Fr Michael for being our priest. For now, there are no changes in our parish life and we will let you know of any future developments and how they will affect you.

We would not be able to continue prosper as a parish if we do not engage in the various activities. The future of our parish rests in your hands. Please consider what skills, experience and knowledge you have that you may be able to use to help our parish. You may think that your gifts are insignificant or you may think that somebody else is already performing certain tasks so there is no need for you to get involved. However, spreading the load makes it easier for all of us to get engaged and all skills are gifts to be shared. Please do not bury but multiply your talents.

One of the ways you can get involved and shape the parish life is through the Parish Pastoral Council. This is an advisory group supporting the parish priest. We meet once a month in the evening for about an hour so it is not a big commitment. The PPC Constitution gives more information about the purpose of the PPC, the various roles and the meetings.

Like many other Catholic parishes, we face changes in the future affecting the level of support and services from the parish priest. Therefore, we need to consider how to best adapt to these changes and offer our prayers to remain a strong and caring community.

I would like to thank you all for being a member of our parish and for your many contributions to our parish life. On behalf of all parishioners, I would like to thank Fr Michael for his unwavering service, love and commitment to us, Deacon Brian for his enduring support in all matters of parish life and Krissie, our parish secretary, for her enthusiasm, support and many contributions to our parish community.

Marlena O'Donnell

Chair of the St Michael's Parish Pastoral Council

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