

OUR LADY IMMACULATE & ST. CUTHBERT'S CROOK

PARISH COUNCIL

Annual report to Parish 2017 – 2018

Current members of the Parish Pastoral Council:

Fr John, Sister Paschaline, Sister Mary-Jane, Ann Callan, Anne Berry, Anne Smith, Duncan Reed, Eugene Brady, Marie Louise Massagli Gallagher, Simon Carson, Susan Hall, Roger Kelly (current Secretary) and Maria Crawford (current Chair).

Since the last AGM unfortunately John Harnett and David Instone had to stand down due to other commitments and we thank them for their efforts whilst on the PC.

In line with our constitution, the following members are in the process of standing down which are Eugene Brady and Seana Coulthard. We thank them for their time, effort and contribution to the Council.

A request for 3 new volunteers to come forward has already gone out.

The Parish Council have met 5 times since the last annual report with the aim to assist the Parish Priest and to support the various groups within the Parish. We receive reports and updates from the groups and we try to assist with activities that they are involved with.

This is obviously our first full year with Fr John at the helm and we thank him for supporting the PC. Fr John has brought about some new ideas such as an Evangelisation Group which was formed last November. Fr John suggested this as a response to Pope Francis' Joy of the Gospel. The group have met a few times and have spoken to people from Prudhoe's Evangelisation Group for ideas to move forward. A Christmas card was sent last year to all families bereaved throughout the year and the same is being done this year. Also a Christmas gift/message was given to all at Christmas mass and also to all school children. This year the group are coming up with another idea as a Christmas message. Fr John has responded to Pope Francis' call for Eucharistic Adoration in parishes as a way of getting closer to the Lord. The introduction of monthly Exposition has been welcomed by many. Fr John also arranged for fundraising for new Church Vestments and I've been told by numerous people how enjoyable the social events were which raised the money. A special thanks to Tow Law and Wolsingham for supporting these social events.

Deacon Michael Rowell has retired from regular ministry in the parish and we thank him for his thoughtful and passionate support for the parish over many years.

A new Convent agreement was drawn up in the last year which was accepted by all parties. Earlier this year we bid farewell to Sr Joy and welcomed Sr Paschaline to our parish. Both Sr Paschaline and Sr Mary Jane are committed to our parish, visit the sick, support FR John in the house, support the office, and are involved with our school and with trying to engage our youth and are currently looking to establish a prayer group for young people.

The maintenance of the land and various buildings within the parish is always a big concern for the PC. There have been a lot of much needed repairs and updating to the Presbytery carried out over the last 12 months some of which was funded by St Cuthbert's Centre. With regards to Church entrance porch, 4 years ago designs for the back of Church were drawn up and agreed on by the Parish and the Diocese. Phase one was carried out last year with the new door being installed and Fr John has agreed to proceed with Phase two next year. Following this work, the Church will then be decorated.

The Church has also been informed of enquiries about potential purchase of part of the former school field. The matter is being handled by the diocese on our behalf.

In response to issues raised by parishioners about access to the cemetery, new gravel footpaths are to be installed next year.

The electrics in the church have been surveyed and found to be in good condition. A tree survey has been carried out in the grounds and it has been agreed to follow the recommendations over a three year period.

The PPC is also looking a more effective heating system in the convent.

The parish finances are still doing well even with less numbers at mass and administration of the finances are as always managed to a very professional standard and a copy of the finances is always made available for anyone to see.

We receive regular reports on Justice and Peace and Churches Together and the work and effort that goes into their many events is amazing such as prayer walks, the Christmas and Easter journeys, Holiday club for families that might be struggling financially and protests outside Sainsbury's!

The SVP and Minnie Vinnies continues with their tireless work which we all know gives so much comfort to a lot of people.

There are many fund raising events that have taken place throughout the year. The effort and tireless work from many people makes sure that these events go from strength to strength. For example the annual Parish Garden Fete which this year was one of the best – weather wise, numbers and atmosphere. It was opened by Jimmy Montgomery who seemed to really enjoy his afternoon especially being referee at the children's 5 a side competition. Just recently the fireworks display put on by the parish thanks to Brian and Joe bracing the weather was another great success and the community seemed to really appreciate it and raised some much needed funding for Fr Ejaz's Orphanage.

The Centre continues to be a wonderful place for all with a diverse programme of events throughout the year such as the Art show, Jazz evenings and a spectacular Christmas programme and is now even famous by being on our tv screens. With new chairs and redecoration it continues to be a very warm and happy place to be in. As I mentioned earlier the Centre kindly paid for a lot of the repairs to the church and Presbytery to the tune of £5000 and was also able to give £500 to the school towards the purchase of new books.

St Cuthbert's school would like to continue to strengthen the link between Parish and school and this was evident at this year's Garden Fete. The PC have asked the Deputy Head to meet with us to discuss ways in which we can help to strengthen the link and she was very happy and willing to do this. Currently the Head Mrs Rosaleen is on maternity leave after having her third child, a little boy and we wish her and her family all the best. We didn't have any children make their 1st Holy Communion this year as it was agreed it would start from Year 4 and so therefore we had to miss a year. Each year group are still regular visitors to church for masses and liturgical activities but we have seen a decrease in the number of children at our weekend masses and this is something the PC are looking at.

During the last year our new partnership was formed called The Escomb Group and a Mission Event was held in the run up to Easter. There were some great events that took place and a real community spirit was forged, but unfortunately our own parish event was cancelled due to the snow which was a real shame. We had hoped to reschedule it but timing never seemed to allow for this so a suggestion has been made to put a different type of event on and welcome all parishes within our partnership to our Church and Centre and I know we will give them a warm welcome. During the organisation of the Mission event, some people in the parish had kindly offered to put on some activities for our school children such as showing them how to read in church, flower arranging, being part of a choir and even how to clean the church – again due to the snow these were cancelled but we are planning on putting these into action next year.

Finally the Parish Council would to thank everyone who supports our parish community and works hard to ensure that our parish not only survives in the future but flourishes and so if you have any suggestions or ideas that you would like to be brought up at the next meeting, please speak to any member of the council.

Thank you.