

OUR LADY IMMACULATE & ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, CROOK
PARISH COUNCIL

Annual General Report to Parish 2018 – 2019

Current members of the Parish Council:

Fr John, Sister Paschaline, Ann Callan, Anne Berry, Anne Smith, Duncan Reed, Eugene Brady, Susan Hall, Maria Crawford, Peter Fleming, Brian Rinaldi and MariaLuisa Massagli Gallagher, (current Chair).

Unfortunately, since the last AGM, Simon Carson had to stand down due to other commitments and we have also said 'goodbye' to Sr. Mary Jane. We thank them for their work and enthusiasm whilst on the PC. We have also lost our loyal and dedicated Roger who worked tirelessly on behalf of his beloved church here in Crook. Maria Crawford was Chair of the PC at the beginning of this current year, but due to family and work commitments had to stand down. We wholeheartedly thank her for all her hard work over the years and are very grateful that she is continuing to be part of the PC. On a more positive note - Brian Rinaldi and Peter Fleming enthusiastically, joined the PC this year.

The Parish Council have met 5 times since the last annual report with the aim to assist our 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.

We have also held an additional meeting with the Acting Head of St Cuthbert's Primary School, with the purpose of exploring ways to aid the school and parish work more closely together. As a result of the meeting it was agreed that the parish would support the school's Heritage topic this autumn term – namely a display of photographs of parents, grandparents & possibly great grandparents, attending the school and church in the past. Details from school will soon be available and all contributions and offers of help will be much appreciated. St Cuthbert's Day was celebrated in school in March with additional activities organised in St Cuthbert's Centre, supported by parishioners. During the year the Head Teacher, Mrs Donnelly, resigned and the school is currently in the process of advertising and appointing a new HT. We hope that parish links with our school will continue to grow and the PC is looking forward to welcoming and working with the new HT.

The maintenance of the land and various buildings within the parish continues to be a big concern for the PC. This year we have been visited by Minnie Fraser from the Diocesan Property Dept. in order for her to compile the Diocesan 5-Year Inspection Report. Initial findings in the Draft Report highlighted repairs were needed to the tower roof and access to the tower; the Sacristy requires attention; repairs are needed to the slates, tiles and gutters on the church and also the presbytery; the Convent roof and windows also require repairs. The final Report was received by Fr John and has yet to be fully discussed by the PC. However, at the last PC meeting in July there was a consensus of opinion that in light of rising costs regarding planned and probable work as a result of the Diocesan 5-Year Inspection Report, it was agreed to cancel any further plans for the extension and alteration of the church porch.

Redecoration of the church is still being discussed with the Diocese.

The potential purchase of part of the former school field is an issue still being handled by the diocese on our behalf. We have also been informed by the Diocese that we require a fire alarm linking the church to the presbytery – which the Diocese will action at some stage, with the parish being charged.

The proposed new gravel footpaths in the cemetery have yet to be installed – hopefully this will happen as soon as the renovations to St Cuthbert's Centre have been completed.

It was also agreed to go ahead with handrails on each side access to the altar. We are still awaiting estimates and plans for this.

The Presbytery has had a make-over – although limited. A new kitchen has been fitted and the living room has been decorated and upgraded. The last time any significant work was done here was in Fr Murphy's time.

The parish finances continue to be managed to a very high standard by Ann Callan, but we are aware of increased costs and expenses against the current downward trend of attendances at Mass which subsequently results in a decrease in collections. The PC have discussed making an appeal to the parish to promote the Gift Aid Scheme and planned weekly contributions. All accounts are submitted to the Diocese each year.

The tenant in St Joseph's Lodge is due to leave soon, and the property will continue to be let. Robinsons will continue to oversee the property.

With regard to the Partnership – during the past year meetings have been attended by Fr John and our Partnership representative, Susan Hall. At present we are being asked for a Property and Community review as well as a 10-year financial forecast of parish expenditure. Thank you to Ann who has completed the financial forecast.

We continue to receive regular reports and updates from the Justice & Peace and the Churches Together groups. The Holiday Clubs & Lunch Clubs have proved to be extremely successful – wonderful in one respect but sad that they have become so necessary. Grateful thanks go to all who give up their time so generously to make these events such a success.

The Evangelisation Group has continued their work quietly but fervently throughout the year. Our parish was represented at the Eucharistic Conference in Liverpool last September. All bereaved families over the last 12 months were invited to a Remembrance Mass last November, and Christmas cards were also sent out to them. Gifts were also distributed at the Christmas Mass – to reach out to our neighbours. The Pentecost Prayer was also much appreciated.

Liturgically we have tried our best over the year, but it goes without saying we are bereft of music which has taken its toll on our services. Many thanks go to the choir who have continued to lead our liturgy each week and to Anne Timothy for organising the choice of hymns. Fr John has made numerous enquiries regarding an organist, but we are still in need. However, other wonderful liturgies have kept us going – Anne's thoughtful Rosary Reflections were much appreciated during Lent and the Stations of the Cross were enhanced with Benediction each week. Much thought and preparation went into our Easter Liturgy and it was beautiful. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each month is also well attended and appreciated.

It must be said, that in light of the current situation in our parish – we are most grateful to all who lead our Eucharistic Services. Particular thanks go to Deacon Michael who has come out of retirement, to the Sisters and to Anne Smith.

At this point I will mention Roger's donation to our parish – it was discussed at the last PC meeting but no final decision has been made.

We continue to be supported by our Sisters in the Convent, and welcome Sr. Uche as our new Parish Sister, replacing Sr. Mary Jane who has relocated to Inverness to start her studies in radiology. A gift was sent to her as a thank you for the time she was with us in Crook and the joy she brought to our school and the parish. We have received a lovely 'thank-you card' from her. Sr. Paschaline continues to work in the school and parish and has introduced Sr Uche to parish life.

Our parish continues to have a marvellous network of outreach groups and organisations. The SVP and Mini Vinnies give their time on a regular basis. Support continues for Fr Ejaz's orphanage. The First Communion Programme was successfully led by Catherine Ringwood this last year and was another beautiful celebration. The Eucharistic Ministers faithfully visit the housebound with Holy Communion each week and additional Eucharistic/Prayer liturgies take place in some of the Residential Homes. We have teams of readers, flower arrangers, church cleaners, welcomers, bidding prayer writers, bulletin compilers, those who take Children's Liturgy and those who take out and welcome the Fatima Statue...a tremendous amount of work is being done and this all helps to build up and strengthen our parish.

Another wonderful asset to our Parish is St. Cuthbert's Centre – of TV fame! Once again the army of volunteers who look after the Centre and provide us with such a varied programme of events are to be commended. As well as providing refreshments here, each Sunday morning. During the last year we have enjoyed Jazz Nights, Bonfire Night, Twelfth Night and St Patrick's Night and of course the Annual Art Show. Fr John has discussed more fundraising ideas – which we hope he will soon be able to take part in.

Our big fundraiser of the year is always the Garden Fete. Once again those amazing volunteers swung into action. Grateful thanks go to all involved and particularly, Eugene, who took over the reins when Roger became ill. We were blessed with lovely weather and a great spirit...though we still need more volunteers if the Garden Fete is to continue.

Mark Hall took over the role of Parish Safe Guarding officer during the year. At present the Diocese is updating records regarding DBS checks on all volunteers who have contact with children and vulnerable adults. Many DBS certificates require updating within the parish.

Finally, the Parish Council would like to thank everyone who supports our parish community and works hard to ensure that our parish not only survives in the future but continues to grow. We have uncertain times ahead so it is now more important than ever that we work together to support our parish community and our parish priest.

If anyone has any suggestions or ideas which they would like to be brought to the next meeting, please speak to any member of the PC.

Thank you