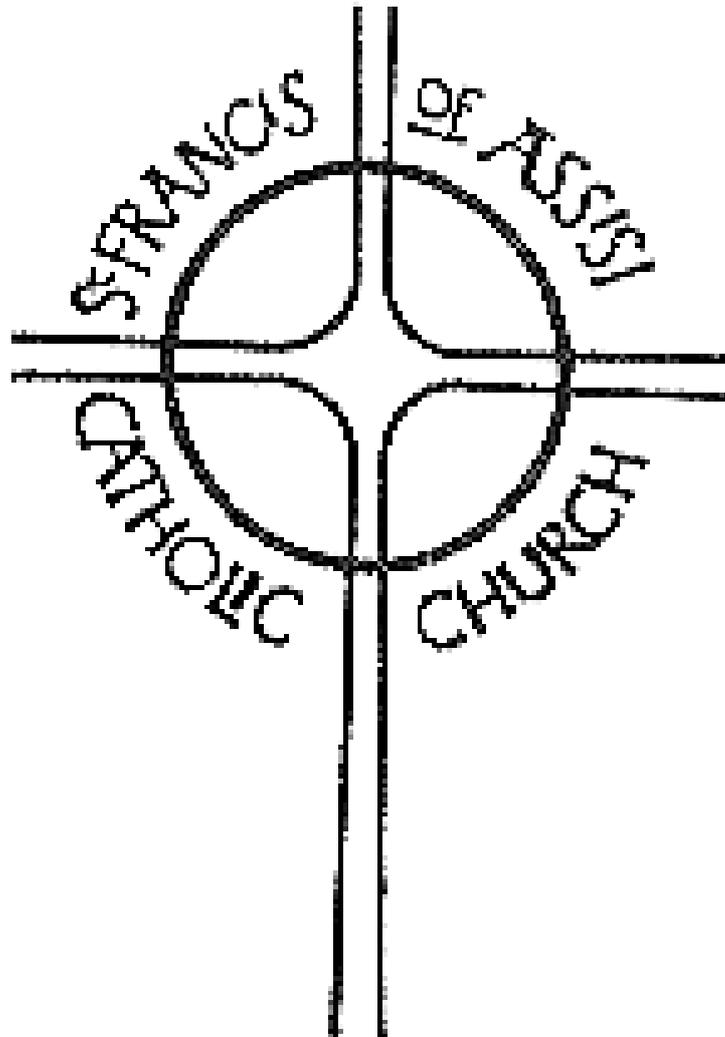


Annual Report of St Francis of Assisi Parish



2009 - 2010

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Report from Chair

It has been a pleasure to chair the parish council for yet another year of change and evolution at St Francis.

We have enjoyed a very active year on the committee.

Highlights for me include

- A totally rewritten and updated website and the introduction of a 'Yahoo' mail group to help with electronic distribution of information such as the newsletter.
- The introduction of a regular group to keep the garden tidy as well as a new shed. They meet regularly on a Saturday morning.
- New baby changing facilities in the toilets.
- Ongoing liturgy and music – both in Mass and in other groups throughout the year. We held an Advent service for the first time as well as hosting an ecumenical Lenten service.
- Wonderful Youth Liturgy in Mass – both in the children's' liturgy groups and in the Youth Mass.
- A large group of our young people who received the sacrament of confirmation. The parish also organised a successful confirmation preparation weekend.
- A equally large group of children who received the sacraments of Communion and Penance for the first time
- Ongoing work on the important subject of Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- Fr. Tomblin's Diamond Jubilee celebration. I have never seen the church so full and it turned out to be a truly joyful celebration for all.
- Amazing efforts at fundraising by the Justice and Peace group – both for CAFOD and other causes. This included the now legendary pantomime and Dr Who night as well as a new folk night.
- And last but not least a Swine Flu epidemic and 'Volcano emergency'. Thankfully God spared us from the former and delivered the Parish Priest back from the latter.

This is just a small part of all the wonderful work and life in our parish and I'd like to thank everybody who contributes to parish life in any way. We are very lucky to have such a vibrant and active community here in Crosspool but should not take anything for granted. Our community will only thrive through the love, prayers and giving of all who are part of it. If we continue to give and take part we will be in a strong place to face the challenges the future holds.

Dominic Shirt

Mission, Justice and Peace

“And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

St Francis of Assisi’s Justice and Peace Group provides a forum for the members of the parish who are working in the areas of justice and peace to discuss, plan and coordinate activities concerned with local, national and global issues concerned with justice and peace. These include fund-raising, awareness, and spiritual activities.

This year the J&P group has organised or supported the following events:

- Book sale for Sr Helen: raised £166.00
- Sale of paintings: raised £300 for Sr Helen and St Wilfrid’s Centre
- Map of Africa for Cafod’s Haiti appeal: raised £108
- Pantomime: raised £1470 for Cafod
- Dr Who Night: raised £230 for Cafod
- Folk night: raised £673.75 for Cafod’s Haiti appeal
- Cafod/Christian Aid walk: raised £85
- Children of Bethlehem activity/prayers used during Younger Children’s liturgy during Advent
- Lenten Promises: parishioners were invited to make a promise to live simply; the promises were brought up as part of the offertory on the first Sunday in Lent
- Cake sale: raised £165.22 for Cafod

The Traidcraft stall runs after 11am Mass each week and after 9am Mass on the first Sunday of the month. The parish, especially the Dance Group, raises funds for Sr Helen’s work in Rwanda. Coffee and tea are collected for St Wilfrid’s Centre. Christmas presents and Easter eggs are collected for the Roundabout Project. The parish also supports financially and directly Church Action on Poverty in its awareness raising and campaigning efforts locally.

Many parishioners are active on their own account in the support of local, national and overseas charities.

Tammy Hervey and Dom Shirt

Pastoral Care, Community

The highlight of this year was Fr Tomblin's 60th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. The Church was packed with many of the priests of the diocese, friends, family and parishioners, but sadly not Fr Kevin Thornton as he was stuck on holiday in Lanzarote due to the Icelandic Volcano eruption. The Mass was followed by a party with much of the congregation staying to enjoy the lovely food. A big thank you to everyone who came and helped, either in the preparation, during the event or with the mammoth amount of washing-up afterwards.

Unfortunately, we have been unable to progress the visiting of the sick, elderly and housebound as much as we would have liked but we hope to make more progress very soon – watch this space!

In the next year we hope to:

- Set up a social committee, to help us organise the social events the parish wants
- Help to promote any parish groups that need more support
- Continue to make progress on the visiting of the sick, elderly and housebound

Clare Byrne and Ana Kingston

Youth Work, Nurture

Over the course of this year, the usual parish activities have continued with an active children's liturgy group, first communion preparation, and a well-used, though small, library of children's books. Last autumn, a large group of young people were confirmed and, as part of their preparation for the sacrament, attended what was by all accounts a very enjoyable weekend retreat.

We have tried to build on the success of this by suggesting a parish retreat for young people, which was planned for this September. Unfortunately, while there was some interest in the, a minimum of 15 was needed for the booking, and we couldn't make the numbers. There has been some discussion of the possibility of a joint initiative with another parish and this is a possibility for next year. In the meantime, we would like to thank all the catechists and volunteers who contribute so much to youth work in our parish.

Younger Children's Liturgy Group

But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Luke 18: 16-18

St Francis of Assisi Younger Children's Liturgy Group welcomes children aged 0-7, accompanied by a responsible parent or other carer. We have large numbers of children attending Younger Children's Liturgy, often as many as 40 children. It forms an important part of the 11am Mass, and the life of the Parish.

The Liturgy is just that: the Liturgy of the Word for children. The children and their carers light a candle to invite Jesus to the Liturgy, do an act of penitence, listen to the Gospel for the day, and respond to it in an age-appropriate way, and say prayers for themselves, the church and the world. The responses sometimes include drama, art or craft work, to encourage the children to reflect on what the Gospel means for them. These may be brought up to the altar during the offertory.

This year, we have specially marked Advent and Lent, including the 'Alleluia box', where we 'put the Alleluia away', to get it out on Easter Sunday. We also regularly contribute to the Parish's Justice and Peace work by praying for children in other parts of the world.

The numbers of leaders on the rota dropped to a critically low point this year, and we were forced to consider not offering children's liturgy on some Sundays. However, we have recruited two new leaders to start this autumn. Anyone who would like to lead Younger Children's Liturgy should approach any of the current leaders, whose names and details are displayed in the Narthex.

Mary Vincent, Sarah Lynch, Penny Watt and Clare Wenham

Liturgy, Spirituality and Faith Formation

Since last September we have organised four main activities. An Advent service took place on Sunday, December 6th. with good attendance. A less popular series of meetings on `Just Church`, concentrating on poverty, was held during Lent. On Good Friday this year the evening ecumenical service was held at St Francis and attendance from the various local churches was good. On Saturday, June 26th. there was a gathering for parish readers, with a practical emphasis.

One member of the sector, with another parishioner, has attended meetings of the Deanery Liturgy and Spirituality group, which in the past two years has set up deanery readers' and musicians' days and is holding one this November for those concerned with parish liturgy.

Jenny King and Gerald Crofton-Martin

Communications

Sector Objectives

The communication sector's objectives for 2009/10 were as follows:

- Maintain effective communication with the parish (notice boards, newsletter, parish directory).
- Update the social calendar regularly.
- Ensure the website is accurate and up to date.
- Redesign the Parish website, to add features and to make it look modern.

Maintain effective communication with the parish

Notice boards: The notice boards continue to be used and are very busy.

Newsletter: This continues to be the main means of communication with the parish and works well. Sadly Noel Lynch had to retire from producing the newsletter and we say a big thank you for all the hard work he's put in over the years. Jayne Middlemas took over this role in January.

Email: The email facility continues to be used with requests for birth certificates, hall bookings and enquiries about activities in the Parish. It is checked on a weekly basis and messages forwarded as appropriate.

Yahoo Group: In December we created a Yahoo Group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stfrancis-sheffield/>) which now has 23 members. Members get the newsletter emailed to them each week and can take part in discussions.

Social Calendar

The calendar is on the website and updated weekly.

Parish Website

The website usage has increased this year and we had almost 2,000 people from over 40 different countries download approximately 10,000 pages.

Most popular pages are the homepage (35% of the traffic) and the newsletter (12% of the traffic).

The website had the most visitors on Christmas Eve but the most page views were on the 5th July, shortly after the redesign went live.

Redesign the Parish website

The website redesign went live in July, after a brief consultation with the Yahoo Group. New features include: feedback form, site search, Google maps and high contrast colour scheme for the visually impaired. At the same time all the content was reviewed and updated.

Emma Dale and Paul Middlemas

Maintenance and Finance

Work over the last 12 months

Maintenance:

Following suggestion made at 2009 AGM for the installation of baby changing facilities in the men's toilets, drop down changing tables have been installed in both the men's and ladies' toilets.

Portable electrical equipment and gas system were tested as per annual requirements to meet current regulations.

Rotting shed in the garden was replaced.

A "Lenten task force" was organised to tidy up the gardens after the winter and maintenance has continued on a monthly basis since then. However more volunteers needed to enable the maintenance by parishioners to be feasible as two or three persons not sufficient.

If you would be willing to help out with the garden, even occasionally, please could you give your name to Ron Jarman or anyone on the parish council – many thanks!

Parish Gift Aid Stats:

Here are a few statistics about donations made on which the parish can reclaim the tax through the Gift Aid Scheme.

- 28 new gift aid declarations since last appeal in March 2009
- 120 parishioners have signed a gift declaration and enable the parish to reclaim tax paid on their contributions (73 by envelope scheme, 43 by standing order and a further few by cheque)
- £9,387 reclaimed back to the parish in gift aid in 2009 (from donations of £35,290)
£10,265 reclaimed back to the parish in gift aid in 2010 (from donations of £38,580)
- average monthly donations made by standing order now approx £1685

Planned work over the next 12 months

Maintenance:

Arrange the five yearly electrical survey of all fixed items of electrical equipment

Undertake the annual gas and electricity inspections to meet current regulations

Review arrangements for regular maintenance of the gardens and grounds and take appropriate action. Either additional volunteers come forward to make a sufficient number or need to engage commercial firm.

Gift Aid:

Undertake awareness talks at masses in February again to continue raising awareness and to make it easy for anyone to support the church by enabling us to claim gift aid on their contribution.

Ron Jarman, Una Moran and Philip Ash