

St Francis of Assisi – Parish Report 2016-17

Mission, Evangelisation & Faith Formation

"Mere administration" can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be "permanently in a state of mission"

Pope Francis (Evangelii Gaudium)

This is the second report from this new group which 'seeks to encourage and enable missionary discipleship to flourish in St Francis' parish'. Since faith formation is the foundation for effective evangelisation the primary aim of this group is to develop and support adult formation alongside the continuing commitment to sacramental catechesis for youth. This report covers our progress 'so far' and thoughts on 'where next'.

So far

- Following the Bishops of England and Wales mission initiative, '**Proclaim**', Hallam Diocese held follow up events attended by Greg Ryan and Lindsay Reynolds. These meetings enabled attendees to hear about initiatives and issues in other parishes. It was very clear from these meetings and our own experience that developing and deepening the faith of our church community should be a priority.
- As reported at the last AGM the Council agreed that St Francis would cover the cost of course fees for parishioners who commit to completing the **CCRS course** and sharing the fruits of their study in the Parish (through involvement in e.g.: catechesis, reading, bible study,

sacramental preparation, parish council). One member of St Francis is currently enrolled, 3 completed in 2015-16. If anyone is interested in registering for 2017, see Greg Ryan or any council member.

- The **Parish catechists** have continued their essential work in youth sacramental preparation, and there was a joyful celebration of Confirmation in May 2017.
- Two events were flagged at the last AGM. i) **The Joy of the Gospel** course took place in May-June 2016. It was very successful with around 30 people from across the deanery attending. ii) During **Crosspool Festival** week we had two events; a midweek Taize service and a jazz evening, which were successful in allowing people to come into the church building for the first time. The Jazz evening was a sell-out and had many non-church goers. Taize services continue to be important ecumenical events and have possibly attracted non-church-goers. These events raise the question of how do we follow-up or allow people to come back?
- The group promotes **national, diocesan and deanery events** and organisations which develop an adult faith (e.g. Catholic People's Week, a Laudato Si conference and the Diocesan Emmaus course).
- The **Laudato Si** conference was an ecumenical meeting run jointly between the Catholic and Anglican churches. It was well attended and with some energy and enthusiasm there could be spin off activities resulting.

Where next?

- Consultation meetings on the future of Sheffield Parishes revealed a strong desire for **collaborative ministry and lay gifts** to be developed. How do we make a start on this in appropriate ways for St Francis?
- Possibly have an **evangelisation group** to put ideas into practice (like J&P) and not just rely on the council.
- Perhaps work through a **course or book** like Divine Renovation as a way of engaging the parishioners. There are ideas from the Laudato Si meeting; courses to study and encouragement to be a sustainable parish.
- **More events** such as the Jazz evening, which have potential for developing relationships with the wider community. This is a first step to evangelism but as mentioned previously how do we follow up these events?
- The key for 2017-18 is allowing everyone to contribute ideas and activities for how we can be a **missionary parish**.

Pastoral support

- Support for Church Activities throughout the year
- Refreshments after 11am Sunday Masses
- Responding to requests for supporting parishioners in need
- Organising events for the parish

Communications

This year we have reorganised the **noticeboards** in the narthex, to try and provide categorisation of different types of information under clear headings. There is still much room for improvement, but hopefully it's striking a better balance between making potentially useful information available to the parish while not overwhelming readers with a mass of posters and notices.

For the first time, we have piloted a **Facebook** page for the parish. As a social medium Facebook has the potential to further build the community bonds of our parish and encourage engagement in all aspects of parish life. We are experimenting with a variety of content to explore what works best. We make use of the existing content compiled for the Franciscan newsletter, but we're able to deliver these in bite-sized snippets that directly link readers to further information. Parishioners who use Facebook are encouraged to find our page by searching Facebook for “@StFrancisSheffield” and clicking “Like”.

The **Franciscan newsletter** and the **parish website** continue to be key elements of the parish communications. Many thanks to Jayne and Paul Middlemas for their ongoing work to produce the newsletter and update the website each week.

The number of visits to the website has increased to around 110 per week (from 90 per week in the previous year). And the minutes from the Justice and Peace meetings are now regularly added to the site. Following a request from a parishioner, the Franciscan is now added to the website earlier in the week (on Friday when possible).

Justice and Peace

The St Francis Justice and Peace Group continues to meet three or four times a year. We always welcome new members. Our main focus is on co-ordinating awareness raising and fund raising activities both for overseas organisations such as **CAFOD** as well as local organisations such as **St Wilfrid's Centre** and the **S2 Foodbank**.

The **Parish Panto** continues to be a major fundraiser for CAFOD and raised over £1800 last year. The recent CAFOD East Africa Appeal raised £3500 which has been matched by the Parish Council for a total of £7000. In other work for CAFOD in the Parish, The **Dance Club** raised over £3800 to support CAFOD's work with refugees.

In October/November last year, to mark the end of the **Year of Mercy**, the Corporal Works of Mercy were displayed each week with suggestions for actions and prayers.

This Lent, leaflets on helping refugees were distributed and a display board in the Narthex provided information. Also in Lent a speaker came from **City of Sanctuary** to speak about what it is like to be a refugee and we raised £120.5 for ASSIST.

DePaul UK, a charity that works with young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Was also a fundraising focus in Lent. Our collection for **Nightstop**, a service that provides accommodation and a hot meal to vulnerable young people raised nearly £600.

St Francis continues to support the **S2 Foodbank** through regularly donations of food and financial support. Regular updates are shared with the parish and

focussed appeals are advertised as necessary. For example, there are special food donations at Christmas. The Foodbank is currently struggling for food donations and financial support so this will be a focus of our activity over the coming year.

Other **future plans** are to support the Panto again this year and themed events in Advent and Lent. We aim to support a range of Justice and Peace issues and have started to work more closely with the Diocesan Justice and Peace Group as well as the local Muslim community.

Collections of tea, coffee and sugar continue for **St Wilfrid's**. Parishioners again gave Easter eggs and Christmas presents to young people in **Roundabout**.

We are aware of other successful fundraising and work on Justice and peace activities within the parish and would welcome new members.

Liturgy and Spirituality

The Liturgy and Spirituality group of the parish council has the aim of providing supplements to the sacramental life of the parish which must always remain the core reason for our being a parish. For the sacramental life of the parish we are dependent on our parish priest Fr. Kevin Thornton and for some our deacon Stephen Parker.

We have been very fortunate to have within the parish Greg Ryan who unfortunately will be leaving the parish this month. He has led **Taize evenings** of prayer and chants each lent and advent for several years which have always

been very well received. He also led a discussion over several evenings of the papal document **Evangelii Gaudium the Joy of the Gospel**. The diocesan initiative on evangelisation based on this document has yet to take hold of our parish.

We held a day on using **music and art as forms of prayer** and also how to use the **Jesus Prayer** in our daily lives.

We had a display to mark the end of the **Year of Mercy** on the corporal works of mercy and then in Lent we had a display on Refugees and how we might be able to help within Sheffield.

Plans for next year

We hope very much to continue with the Taize evenings. This will depend very much on the form the musicians take in the future.

There will be two **parish retreats**

- 30th September 2017 this will be lead by Stephen Parker and the topic will be 'Using St.Paul and the Psalms for Prayer'
- Lent 2018 Fr. Kevin Hayden OSB from Ampleforth Abbey has agreed to come to the parish for a weekend

Any suggestions or requests would be gratefully received.

Maintenance, Buildings & Fabric of the Church

- New fire alarm panel and automatic fire detection sensors installed, along with signage.
- Emergency lighting installed in presbytery and church worship area, fire escape routes also created.
- Security lighting upgraded.
- Church hall curtains have been fire proofed.
- Church entrance flag stones cleaned and re-grouted.
- Defibrillator purchased and installed.
- Parish' Safety tool box' health and safety website now up to date for 2017.

Hallam Churches Report May 2017

The Hallam Churches consists of the following:-

- *St Columba's* Anglican Church, Manchester Road
- *St Francis of Assisi* Catholic Church, Sandygate Road
- *St Luke's* Church Lodge Moor
- *Stephen Hill* Methodist Church, Manchester Road
- *Tapton Hill* Congregational Church, Manchester Road
- *Nether Green* Methodist, Fulwood Road

The Hallam Churches group meet regularly and organise events for all the churches to participate. It is a very friendly and welcoming group with representatives from all the different churches.

There is a group called **Care in Crosspool** who look after lonely and housebound people in various ways:-

- Befriending people/ Shopping
- Bringing them to a lunch group every week on Wednesdays

In September 2016 a “**Walk through the Bible**” was organised with interaction through the old and new testaments. There were lots of story telling and action to help people remember the stories of the Bible.

Carol Singing at Stephen Hill

There was a very enjoyable carol sing with coffee and mince pies afterwards.

Light the Way

An event was held for all the family at St Columba's 06/01/2017 with a talk by Paul Furbey from Christian Aid. The theme of his talk was about their work with refugees around the world. There was also a bring and share supper with an international theme so people were encouraged to bring a dish from their own country or from a favourite part of the world.

Christian Unity Week

There was an exchange of pulpits 22 January for the churches who were able to be involved. Unfortunately our Deacon Stephen Parker was not available as he was on duty at the Northern General.

Womens World Day of Prayer

This event was held at Stephen Hill on Friday 3 March and the theme was “The Women of the Philippines”. There was a very good attendance and everyone was given a small bag of rice to remember the women. A great welcome was received.

HOPE – Human Organisation for Pioneering in Education

Sister Lucy Kurien set up this organisation in 1997 to help women in Kerala, Southern India to help women and children who are destitute and who need shelter. To date she has 39 centres for 850 children and 500 women. The children receive education. All faiths and and castes are treated equally. On Wednesday 10 May Sister Lucy will be speaking at an event at Tipton Hill Church. She has received Woman of the Year and Mother Teresa Award.

Deepcar Brass Band

There will be a Brass Band concert on Saturday 3 June at Stephen Hill Church. Shared tea at 5.30pm and the concert at 7pm.

St Columba's Church

Rev Frances Eccleston left recently and the new Minister is **Iain Lothian** commencing March 2017.