

St Francis of Assisi Parish Council



Annual Report

2012 - 2014

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Spirituality, Liturgy & Faith Formation

This has been a very busy and fruitful eighteen months for the Liturgy and Spirituality group within the parish council.

There is an ongoing Inspir prayer group that meets regularly in a parishioner's house. There were successful and well attended Taizé evenings in Advent and Lent supported by the music group. Deacon Stephen Parker gave a talk on the nativity stories in December.

In March 2013 Sister Mary Stella came down from Hying monastery to give two talks about Praying with Icons and this was followed by a group from the parish attending a Beginners' Iconography course and completing an icon of Jesus the Pantocractor this March.

Also in March a group from the parish led a CPW adult weekend retreat at Hying monastery on 'Praying Twice: music and the liturgy'.

In April Lavinia Jones gave a very interesting talk on the depiction of the Passion in Art in her talk 'Road to Salvation in Images'. About 50 people attended this talk in the Assisi Hall. Margaret Silf presented a Parish day of Prayer in March.

Future events include a parish retreat in July given by Fr Kieran Monaghan OSB and a return visit from the Inspir team in September.

There is also a proposed St Francis parish day fete on the 5th October. A parish pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi will take place in October.

Past events have been supported by an audience of between 30 to 45 people, from a wide range of parishes in Sheffield, Rotherham and Chesterfield. This is largely due to information about the events being distributed in a wide variety of ways including flyers, Deanery Liturgy and Spirituality group meetings and articles in the Hallam news. The group welcomes feedback on these and other possible liturgical events.

Pastoral Care and Community

The focus of this group during the past eighteen months has been to strengthen, develop and support the 'Churches Together in Hallam' initiative. Two members of the Parish Council normally attend group meetings with representatives from all seven churches where liturgical and social events are planned and prepared for. St Francis Church hosted such a meeting in October.

Last summer, as part of the Crosspool Festival, members from each church helped to serve refreshments at the Fun Day at Coldwell Lane. As the name suggests, this was a fun occasion and allowed the helpers to get to know each other and serve the wider community.

In November, during One World Week, the group organised an event, held at St Columba's, which included an international shared meal, a drumming workshop and a talk by a representative from CAFOD. This event was well attended and brought members of the churches together in a way which serves to highlight our Christian mission in our own community and further afield.

On Good Friday, 18th April our Deacon, Stephen Parker, led 'Good Friday Reflections' at St Francis Church. In promoting collaboration between the churches, we seek to provide a visible Christian presence in the community beyond our own parish.

Many parishioners continue to visit the sick and housebound; these visits are greatly appreciated by the recipients and enjoyed by those who visit. We thank most sincerely those who carry out this important mission.

Youth and Nurture

The Youth and Nurture section of the Parish Council has concerned itself in the main with maintaining and improving the sacramental life of the parish where it impacts on the life of young people in the parish. In attempting to this, it looked to make the programmes relevant and informative, while involving parents in the process.

The Reconciliation and Holy Communion programme continues to be produced and delivered every year. The parental sessions are now an established part of the programme. The parish has adapted sections from other programmes to make it relevant to our children. This year fourteen children have received the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time, and they will receive their first Holy Communion on the feast of Corpus Christi.

The Confirmation programme will be delivered in this year after a two year gap. It is hoped that this smaller gap between successive Confirmation programmes will allow for a smaller group of young men and women. It is hoped that this fact, as well the more homogeneous age group, will make it easier to engage with all the individuals embarking on the programme. The sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated on the 22nd September.

The monthly Youth Mass has not taken place for a while because there is currently no one to take over the organisation of the event. A lot of the young men and women who used to be actively involved in the Youth Mass have moved on to university, but it is felt there is still scope to re-establish this celebration.

The parish council has approved an appeal for donations to support the HPPC pilgrimage to youth. As a result of the appeal money was collected to help send four young people to Lourdes.

The parish council also approved the collection of food items for Sheffield 2 Food Bank. A bin for this purpose is now in the narthex and the food bank has written a letter of thanks for the donations so far.

Mission, Justice & Peace

St Francis of Assisi Justice & Peace Group meets three times a year to organise and co-ordinate awareness and fund raising activities for CAFOD and other organisations working with the poor at home and abroad.

The highlight of the year is the Parish Panto which is our chief fundraiser for CAFOD and is held just prior to the season of Advent. In 2013 we raised £1334.67 which was less than the previous year's £1400.

The 50th Anniversary Doctor Who Night (£231) and the Cake Sale were other fundraisers for CAFOD.

Moving on to activities in the UK, parishioners again gave Easter Eggs and Christmas Presents to young people in Roundabout, whilst a tremendous International Food Event raised awareness of the reality of food poverty whilst raising £660 which was doubled by the Parish Council to £1320 for the St Wilfrid's Residential Centre.

We held a Poverty Quiz to raise awareness of poverty issues in the UK and particularly the poorer parts of Sheffield, and will be starting to collect for one of the Food Banks during 2014 in addition to the usual tea, coffee and sugar collections for St Wilfrid's.

The Ascent Group raised money for St Luke's Hospice.

Parishioners are very welcome to join us for our meetings. The next one will be held on 30 June at 8.00 pm in the presbytery – we aim to keep them relatively short and sweet.

Maintenance

Since the last AGM the maintenance section of the parish council has been responsible for the placement of two handrails in the sacristy and the main church body, to help access. This work was carried out in such a way so as to be in keeping with the rest of the church furniture, and also to conform to health and safety requirements.

The chairs in the Assisi hall have been cleaned. This proved to be a more cost effective solution compared to the cost of reupholstering the chairs

Facilities are now in place to provide safe pedestrian access to the church building during snow and icy conditions. Due to the relatively mild weather we have had this last winter, there has been no need to develop a rota as to who carries out the gritting, but this will need to be addressed for subsequent winters.

Peter Shaw has carried out repairs to a leak in the roof after this winter's stormy weather, and he will return to provide a better seal around the dormer windows.

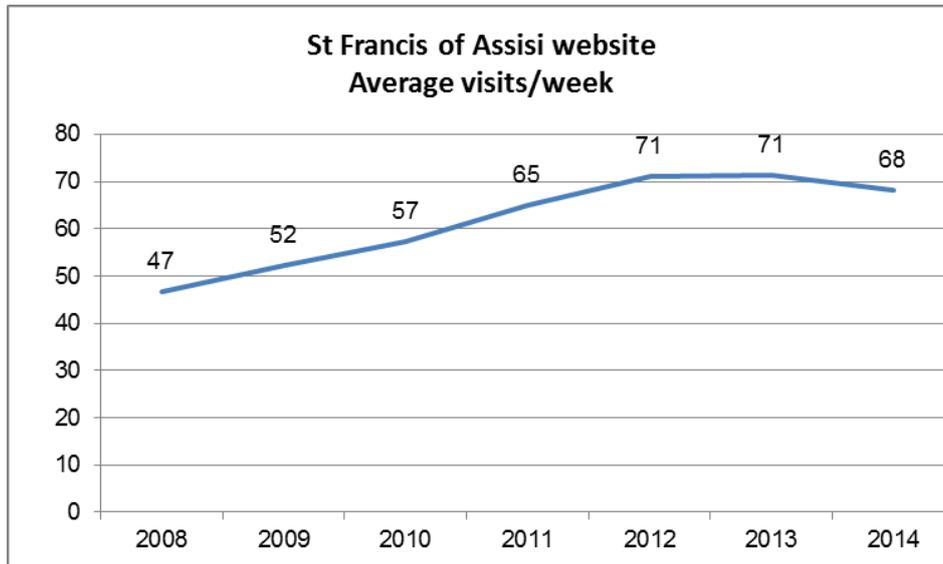
St Francis of Assisi is now part of a diocesan Health and Safety initiative called 'Tool Box'. This enables the parish to maintain a proactive approach to maintenance and safety issues, by keeping abreast with new developments. It also allows the documentation of all issues that have been addressed, and others that need further attention.

The toilets adjoining the Assisi Hall need to have a face lift, as only minimal improvements have taken place so far.

Communications

Parish website (www.stfrancisrc-sheffield.org.uk)

We have continued to update the church website regularly, adding the newsletter each week and also changing the home page to show forthcoming events or topical issues.



During advent and Christmas, we replaced the photo of the church on the home page with the Advent/Christmas banner to give the website a new feel. We have done the same during Lent and Easter.

The number of visits to the church website is around 70 per week. As usual, the busiest times of year were Christmas (165 visits during Christmas week) and Easter (154 visits during Easter week).

The most visited pages between April 2013 and March 2014 were as follows:

Page	Number of page views
Home page	3,567
Newsletter	1,643
Contact us	772
Activities and Groups	592
Times of Services	547
Parish Council	319
The Liturgy and Prayer	285
Calendar	274
The Diocese & the Parish of St Francis	253
The Sacraments	243

Parish e-mail (parishcouncil26@yahoo.co.uk)

The Parish e-mail account is checked at least weekly. The types of e-mails received are enquiries about Mass times, hall bookings, requests for baptisms, weddings etc. The numbers of e-mails received has fallen recently. Normally in the run up to Christmas, we receive several asking for Christmas Day Mass times. We displayed these on the homepage of the website from early December this year which seems to have been useful as we had no e-mails this year asking about them.

Franciscan

I have continued to produce the Franciscan each week (except for a short break in August). The volume of material fluctuates but is usually manageable.

The Franciscan is also available on the website. In a typical week, around 20 people download it from the website.

Notice Boards

The notice boards in the narthex remain one of the main ways of communicating with the Parishioners. New posters are often advertised in the Franciscan but everyone is encouraged to look at the noticeboards regularly.

Parish Calendar (www.stfranciscrc-sheffield.org.uk/calendar.htm)

This has been updated regularly.

Parish Directory

Contact details in the Parish Directory were updated in October 2013.