

# 2015 PARISH COUNCIL AGM

## INTRODUCTION

Father Michael, Father Martin, Father Maurice, Chairman, Fellow Parishioners. I wish you all a very good afternoon.

Whilst at this meeting – **our annual AGM** – my duty is to report to the Parish on our financial affairs for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2015, I know that a few Parishioners would like to know how and why we have embarked on such a massive refurbishment of our Church. There has been one request in particular, that at this meeting, Father Michael should give “**full disclosure of total costings and a breakdown of how those are made up.....etc.**” So, Mr Chairman, with your kind permission, whilst, half way through the project, we are not yet in a position to report on total costs, I would like to take the meeting through the process we have had and continue to have to follow, in order not only to restore our beautiful church to something approaching its original beauty, but to make it fit for the next generations of Catholics in our Parish.

## To Begin.....

When Father Michael was appointed as our Parish Priest last year, he took time to assess and reflect on the needs of our Parish and came to the conclusion that we were not yet ready for the very ambitious project that had been initiated by his predecessor – Father John – but, however, there was a need to tackle some major and long-overdue maintenance that had been delayed in anticipation of the major redevelopment that had been discussed for many years previously.

Father Michael decided therefore to tackle the essential work that was needed and **could be afforded** without the need to go to the Parish begging for funds. As a result, a list of **Essential Maintenance** and **Desirable improvements** were identified and submitted to Father Michael for his consideration and approval.

The Essentials were: -

1. Roof Repairs.
2. Re-wiring Electrical Installations in order to obtain certification for the building.
3. Improvements to lighting and audio systems in the church.
4. Redecoration of the interior of the Church and improvements to the building fabric.

And the desirables, in order of priority, were: -

- 1.1 The provision of extra car-parking spaces.
- 1.2 Replacement of the Organ.
- 1.3 Redesigning the Choir loft and the rear of the Church to increase capacity.
- 1.4 Cleaning, repairing and re-hanging the Stations of the Cross.
- 1.5 Repairing Pews, polishing the floor and replacing existing carpets.
- 1.6 Cleaning, redecorating and lighting the Mortuary Chapel.
- 1.7 Consideration of a new entrance and review of Disabled Access.
- 1.8 Improvements to the Cemetery entrance and, if funds allowed, consideration could also be given to the provision of a covered entrance at the Holy Name and Solar Panels on the South-West facing roof space.

Father Michael and the Community, following consultation with the Carmelites, agreed to the proposals and asked that we should now proceed with the refurbishment, undertaking as much as our available funds would allow.

## Available Funds

Available funds were likely to be to in the region of £1 million. Consisting of:

- £60,000 of Existing and accumulated reserves.
- £50,000 from the Harry Hancock legacy.
- £750,000 from the Nancy Deeves legacy
- £75,000 from “Together-in-Faith”
- £60,000 refund from our Insurance Company.

## The Process

It must be understood by Parishioners that, whilst Father Michael has the final say on how the Parish spends available funds, the Church belongs to the Diocese and we, in the Parish, cannot plan or undertake any work on the buildings without authorisation from Northampton.

So, the next step was to gain approval from the Diocese to carry out as much of this work as we could afford. Before approval was obtained however, the property director recommended and organised a structural survey of the roof to assess its state and the extent of remedial work required. The roof, as we all know, was in a poor state of repair, with no insulation and the survey confirmed that major repairs were needed and should include insulation to current building standards.

The property Director agreed our proposed refurbishment programme and presented our plan to the Trustees of the Diocese for their permission for us to carry out the refurbishment.

The trustees gave us the go-ahead and the responsibility for organising the work now passed on to the Property Director, whose first task was to appoint a **Project Manager and Main Contractor**. We had no say in these appointments, but the chosen contractor – **Challenge Management** – is well known to the Diocese and has wide experience in Church Refurbishments, whilst Aidan Lynch has been a Project Manager on similar projects throughout the Diocese.

Both were fully briefed by us in the presence of the Property Director and were given details of our “**Wish List**”, based on which the main contractor identified the **Sub-Contractors** he would invite to tender for the various aspects of the work. The Diocese requires a minimum of three quotes for all major work and the final selection and appointment of the successful sub-contractor is made by Northampton.

In the Parish, we can and have submitted names of local companies that could be considered and invited to tender, but, the final selection remains in the hands of the Diocese.

We have been and continue to be fully consulted on detailed aspects of the refurbishment, such as the selection of light fittings and are kept fully informed of work progress, problems encountered such as the discovery of Asbestos on the roof beams and, so far, work is progressing satisfactorily and according to plan.

## So, how much is all this going to cost?

The short answer is “**a lot**” – I very much doubt that we shall see much change out of our available £1 million pounds. At the last project meeting on Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, Aidan Lynch’s budget for the essentials stands at **£943,419** and, so far, we are in line with this budget.

At this point, half way through the project, we are unable to give the Parish “**The Final Costings**” but, you can rest assured that every penny we spend will be accounted for. Parishioners will be able to scrutinise our detailed accounts, should they wish to do so.

**Personally**, I am happy to report to this meeting that I have full confidence in Hugh Davies, the Property Director of the Diocese and his appointees and would like to express my gratitude to Hugh for his guidance, advice and help in this massive undertaking. No doubt, there will be some in the Parish who might feel that they could have done better and will be critical of the end result but, I am confident that the majority of our Parishioners will be happy with the results and the way we have spent our current available funds.

Mr Chairman,

I would now like to report on the financial accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2015.

#### **In General.....**

Once again, I am pleased to report that, thanks to some very generous donations and legacies, we covered all our expenses and ended the year on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March showing a positive balance of £61,212. The two legacies received during the financial year were for £50,000 and £5,000.

#### **Income.....**

Without these, our Income would have been £257,795, an average weekly income of **£4960**. Our total expenditure, at £276,198, on the other hand, was an average **£5,312**. On average therefore, **our weekly income is still £350 less than our expenditure - a shortfall of 7%**.

Whilst this shows a very slight improvement on the previous year, I must again point out that the Parish cannot continue to rely on the generosity of the few to cover the running costs of the Parish. I would again urge all Parishioners, who have not yet done so, to please review the contribution they make to our running costs - at least annually. Keep the blue card reminder as a bookmark in your Missal, marking the start of the preparatory prayers – ***“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you.....”***

Should you have lost your blue reminder card, there are plenty more at the back of our churches.

#### **Gift Aid.....**

Gift-aided donations were similar to the previous year. Although the amount received this year, at £26,150, was £903 less than last year, the percentage of donors who are gift-aiding their donations has remained virtually the same.

#### **Expenses.....**

In general, both income and expenditure are similar to last year's and in line with expectations. Property Costs show an increase of £16,225 of which, £5,227 relates to the refurbishment of the Oratory and costs of £10,405 related to the planning of the Church redevelopment project which of course was abandoned. In addition to these, £2,728 was paid out in relation to the sale of Crossways.

It is well appreciated that St Joseph's is blessed with an army of willing and hard-working volunteers, whose efforts save the Parish considerable sums of money and we thank God for them all.

Details of the Parish Income and expenditure for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2015 are included in the report.

### Events.....

Supporting the many social occasions organised by the **Events Team**, provides funds for many needs that the Parish would otherwise have to do without and we are very grateful to all who give their support on these enjoyable occasions. Last year, the funds raised were used primarily for the on-going maintenance and updating of our administration infrastructure but, in addition to this, some £20,000 was spent on re-gilding our chalices and the Monstrance and repainting the Easter Candle Stand, as well as refurbishing the Oratory, enabling us again to celebrate Mass In there. Celebrating the early morning Mass in the Oratory is particularly beneficial, especially during the winter months when we can avoid heating the whole Church for the sake of the early Mass attenders. The refurbishment work accounts for the sizeable increase of £14,339 in our Liturgical costs over the previous year.

We are very grateful to Christine Hopson and the many volunteers who work so hard to organise and run these valuable and necessary fund-raising events that are much enjoyed by all who attend.

### The Furniture Market.....

Another group of hard-working volunteers are the ladies and gentlemen who turn up regularly on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings, to operate the **The Furniture Market**. Their regular monthly contributions to our running costs are used towards paying for general maintenance. This financial year, their contribution amounted to £16,900, an increase of £2,400 on the previous year. It must be remembered that the Market also donated the same amount to many local good causes, thus making a very valuable contribution to the Parish's Outreach efforts.

The Furniture Market is now under the Chairmanship of David Parkhouse, who was elected to succeed Maurice Carkett. The management Committee of the market, wishing to mark Maurice's many years of service, appointed him "Life President". The Parish also presented Maurice with a Papal Blessing, in recognition and gratitude for his work.

On the subject of Outreach, resulting from a request for us to publicise the amounts collected in "second collections" whilst it has been difficult for us to do so accurately this year, we can tell you that, in total, the second collections were in the region of £20,000. We are putting in place a better recording system in order to produce more accurate figures in future.

### Maintenance.....

We have continued with the bi-annual inspection and review of our buildings to ensure that all maintenance needs are identified and dealt with and, as a result, we are now keeping up to date with our general maintenance needs. As already reported, the increase in costs in maintenance are mainly due to the refurbishment work carried out in the Oratory, without which, costs would have been in line with the previous year.

The cost reduction in the maintenance of our boilers and heating system is showing the benefit of the investment made in the boiler room two years ago. However, the poor insulation and draught-proofing of the building, combined with the number of external doors in use and very often left open, especially after services, remains the major cause of heat loss and, on a cold day, it becomes impossible to restore a comfortable temperature in time for the following service.

Whilst Mass Representatives do their very best to keep external doors shut during the cold winter months, we have not yet improved the draught proofing and general efficiency of our buildings. As a result, our utility costs remain high. Hopefully, the current refurbishment programme will show some improvements in our energy consumption.

### **Farewell and Welcome.....**

At the end of the financial year, Tony De Vletter and Paul Smith handed over their responsibilities as Parish Treasurer and Gift Aid Administrator respectively to Chris North and Teresa Evans. Both Tony and Paul worked extremely hard to leave the Financial Affairs of the Parish in a very much better state than they found them in and in the knowledge that both have handed over to very safe hands. In welcoming Chris North and Teresa Evans to the Finance Committee, we wish Tony and Paul an enjoyable and well-earned rest.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the other Finance Committee members – Father Michael and Father Martin, our bursar, – John Bates, who looks after Safeguarding and Health and Safety and acts as treasurer for the Events Team, - Dan Taylor, who keeps the Carmelite Accounts, - Ed Poole, whose knowledge and experience on property maintenance helps to keep our premises in good order – and last, but by no means least, Robert Thompson, who keeps our heating and energy consumption under a very watchful eye. I thank them all for the support they give me in keeping our finances in good order.

### **Outlook**

The refurbishment programme now well underway, has been possible mostly thanks to two very generous legacies from the late Nancy Deeves and Harry Hancock. Parishioners should note that these essential works would not have been possible without them. May our Good Lord reward their generosity and grant them Eternal Rest.

As already mentioned, Parish income is 7% lower than our current running costs and unless Parishioners accept their responsibilities to provide sufficient funds to cover our costs, it will be necessary to borrow or carry out special fund-raising campaigns to prevent us going into debt or carry out future redevelopments in the Parish.

We, today's Parishioners have been extremely fortunate that our predecessors provided us with the wonderful facilities we have enjoyed for many years, without the need for us to provide funds to pay for them. Now it is our turn to make sure that we leave behind a Church that will serve the needs of our successors in this, our wonderful Parish of St Joseph's.

Mr. Chairman, Father Michael, Parishioners, I thank you all for your patience and kind attention.

***John Forte – Chair of St Joseph's Finance Committee***

*September 2015*