

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

General

In common with the UK and Europe at large, the general economic situation has had a detrimental and negative effect on our Parish finances. Whilst our income has remained more or less static for the last five years, our expenses have continued to rise over and above the rate of inflation. At the end of the last financial year (March 2012), our total income for the year amounted to **£258,789** whilst our expenditure rose to **£272,986**, leaving us with a deficit of **£14,197**. The full accounts are detailed on the sheet attached.

This has meant that, during this recession, we have been using our reserves to fund the shortfalls and, unless we can now increase our income, by the end of this current financial year (March 2013) we are in danger of using up the remnants of our reserves.

The Parish responded generously to Father John's appeal at the end of February, as a result of which, we have seen an improvement of approximately 10% in our weekly income. Whilst this improvement helped to reduce our predicted deficit of £20,000 by £6,000, it is still unlikely that we will break even by the end of this current year. The measures we have taken to curtail our expenses, including the restriction of maintenance to essential needs, will therefore have to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

The Furniture Market's contribution of **£15,450** went towards our running costs and was used mainly to run and maintain our old boilers, one of which was no longer serviceable. Without this valuable contribution, the Church would have been without heating for the major part of last winter. We are very grateful to the many volunteers who devote so much time and effort to run the Furniture Market. Not only do they make a valuable contribution to our running costs, but they help many other local charities and good causes. St. Joseph's is indeed very fortunate to have such a voluntary organisation.

The total cost of replacing the two boilers, came to **£47,548**, the whole of which had been raised over the past two years by the **Events Team**. In saying "thank you" to the many volunteers who run so many events in the Parish, we really wish to thank all Parishioners who have and continue to support these fund-raising events. Without your generosity, we could not afford such essential modernisation of our Church. We are confident that the new, state-of-the-art boilers will consume far less gas and will be much cheaper to run and maintain.

Thanks are also due to the many tax-paying Parishioners who **Gift Aid** their weekly contributions. At no extra cost to them, our income last year included tax refunds from HMRC of **£21,092**. Another 23 Parishioners joined in the Gift Aid scheme this year, bringing the average of gift aided donations in our Parish to circa 60%, against

the Diocese average of 65%. We urge all tax payers who do not yet gift aid their donations, to seriously consider doing so. As one of the largest Parishes in the Diocese, we should aim to set a good example by raising our gift-aided donations above the Diocese average. Simply, by stating that you wish to gift aid your donation and providing our Covenant Secretary with your address, the value of the amount you give by Standing Order or place in your envelope each week is worth an extra 25% to the Church.

Outlook

Unfortunately, as we all know, the current financial situation is unlikely to improve over the coming year, as a result of which, we have had to put on hold many improvement plans we had both for the Church and the Parish Centre and restrict our spending to unavoidable and essential maintenance.

We continue to rely very much on our many volunteers, who devote so much time to provide many hours of unpaid labour. We will continue to use the funds contributed by our **Furniture Market** towards our running costs and essential maintenance, whilst funds raised by the **Events Team** will be used for special projects to update and improve our infrastructure. The next major project will be the installation of a new and up-to-date telephone system, for which we require an estimated £4,000. As with the boilers, the present system is now obsolete and component parts are no longer manufactured.

Whilst appreciating how hard it is for us all to keep up our standard of living, we must not neglect the needs of our Church. Our predecessors made many sacrifices to build it for us. It is our duty and responsibility not only to maintain what we have, but to continue to build and improve our facilities so that we can leave behind a Church that will continue to serve and provide for the needs of our Parish and our future generations.

May the Good Lord help us all to fulfil our obligations!

John Forte.

Chair – St. Joseph's Finance Committee.