



2023 Annual Report



Parish Prayer

Lord, you who said:
“Behold I make all things new”
Send forth your Spirit and
renew the heart of your parish.
Renew what is weary and worn.
Restore what is old and fragile.
Reclaim what has been lost.
Fill us anew with your gifts.
Gifts to love, gifts to heal.
So that we, in turn, may help
others to know and love you.

Amen.

“The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s Word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.”

Pope Francis

Evangelii Gaudium, from paragraph 28

*Warmest of greetings from the
Carmelite Community here at St Joseph's*



*(left to right) Fr Jerome, Fr Bob, Fr Martin, Fr Theophilus and Fr John
(seated) Fr Maurice*

Our life is at the service of God's people. Prayer is a priority in that service. We are privileged to have a host of great saints and writers who have enriched the Church and guided countless pilgrims along the road of prayer and in their spiritual search including Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity and Edith Stein. They are sure and tested guides, who speak from their own experience and offer help and encouragement to others.

Our contribution as Carmelites lies principally in helping people in their prayer, whether they pray regularly or have forgotten how to pray. We try to give our celebration of sacraments or the way we run our parishes a prayerful quality that is distinctive. We invite people to join us in our prayer. We pray with and for people.

"Those who join the Carmelite Order are not lost to their near and dear ones, but have been won for them, because it is our vocation to intercede to God for everyone."

St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

A Note from the Carmelite Community

This year has been one of shifting sands and changing winds in many ways and at different levels. Indeed, it is becoming warmer as climate change is becoming an ever more significant reality in our world and in our lives.

The world has moved on, both 'out there' in the wider domain and closer to home in our own parish. Last year witnessed the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. This year saw the Coronation of our Monarch King Charles III. Last year saw the demise of Boris Johnson as PM and in quick succession Liz Truss too. This year saw the election of Rishi Sunak to the post of Prime Minister. It also has been a time of change in our own Carmelite Community. Fr Jerome joined us from his posting in Wales. Following our Provincial Chapter in Derry, which elected Fr James Noonan as the new Provincial, Fr John Williamson was moved to Kensington. Recently we welcomed Fr Theophilus as the newest member of our Community. We also do not forget Galyna our Ukrainian cook who joined us last November and has kept us fed and watered during the weeks since. A special mention of June, our cleaner, who has spent 30 years dutifully looking after successive Gerrards Cross Communities.

This year has seen the closing of the Parish Centre/Hall building owing to health and safety issues. Whilst we recognise this has been frustrating for some, we are working hard on a resolution to this. On the brighter side of parish life, there has been a return of the 7am Mass to the Oratory and Rosary Circle has also resumed in the Oratory. Other highlights include the return of RISE Theatre with their production of 'Faithful Companions' and the awarding of three Bene Merenti Medals during the Bishop's Visitation. Fr John McGowan published his new book, "*Sister Teresa & Father Jerome*" which is a novel about the friendship between St Teresa of Avila, who founded our Order and the first Provincial of our Order.

We have been living through difficult times this last year. The war in Ukraine continues and the recent hostilities in the Holy Land are tragic. We keep these war-torn areas particularly in our prayers. The recession has deepened in varying degrees in our country and across the world. Our parish too has been affected. We thank particularly our SVP group which continues to work unobtrusively to help those most in need. Thanks too are due to those who help in other outreach programmes and initiatives, the London & Slough Run, Furniture Market, the Blue Container for the clothing shop in support of the Ukrainian people and those who prepare and distribute the monthly homebound packs to keep people connected.

Our connectedness is another significant theme that has risen to further prominence this year. In fact, three years of preparation has culminated in the Synod on Synodality which commenced on the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi. It started a process of connecting people at every level within the Church, to commence a dialogue to look at the Church and the world anew from where we are now and where we should go in the future.

Inspired by this, our Bishop David Oakley initiated and brought to completion the process of a Diocesan Assembly to look at the themes of the Synodal discussions. Through respectful dialogue, with gracious listening and gracious speaking, he and the assembly team will try to put some of the fruits of that into concrete objectives and practical actions.

In parallel with this, the Pastoral Area Council has met regularly to try to keep the channels of communication open between our ten parishes, to promote greater cohesion and to identify common and specific needs. It looks at ways we can support each other, work together and perhaps gain some economies of scale in the process by pooling our resources and sharing our challenges and inspirations.

We are trying to foster a greater sense of community, not just at parish level, but throughout our pastoral area, the diocese, the wider church and beyond. This autumn we welcome Bishop David and pray for him in his Pastoral Visitation of all ten parishes within our pastoral area. May this be an inspiration to us and help broaden our perspective beyond our parish. We pray too for the synodal process that it may bear positive fruit.

As we look forward, we pray for the various initiatives that are underway. For the Emmaus Scripture Talks (a response to what we heard during our listening exercise when preparing our parish submission for the synodal process), that they may further the message of the Word of God and foster a greater understanding of its relevance in our daily lives. For our new family-based catechesis and sacramental preparation programmes and the successful reintroduction of monthly children's and youth Masses. May the Lord bless these to bear much fruit.

Our thanks are due to all our staff and volunteers for all you do to promote the life of the parish and the Church. May the Lord continue to inspire you, give you strength and grace and grant you His joy and every blessing.

One last thought to leave with you... in these strange times it is perhaps significant that Pope Francis signed his third encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti' on 3rd October 2020 on the tomb of St Francis of Assisi. It was a follow up to 'Laudato Si' which called for a realisation of our connectedness to all creation and our need to care for our planet and all life. 'Fratelli Tutti' is an exhortation to universal brotherhood. Hence the Synod process that this began, a true listening and dialogue between all peoples to promote understanding and respect for every person in an effort to promote that peace for which St Francis prayed and to which he gave witness.

Let us pray therefore that the Synod and all the above initiatives that have been born in this time of dialogue may continue to bear fruit to bring ever greater peace and reconciliation in our own lives and in the world at large.

Fr Bob Davies
Prior & Parish Priest

Health & Safety

Health and Safety is an increasingly important part of daily life. Our churches, as public places of worship, are no exception. It is a mistake to believe that accidents will not happen in any of our buildings, or that health and safety only applies to larger organisations or commercial businesses. Parishes have a duty of care to ensure that no-one is harmed while attending church, participating in parish related activities or working/volunteering on parish premises.

St Joseph's is committed to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all those who live, work, volunteer, visit, hire or otherwise use parish premises. It does so by taking steps to eliminate or minimise any risks or hazards under our control, carrying out systematic risk assessments which are reviewed regularly, where we then advise the Parish Priest on the law and ways to improve our safety procedures. Following his decision, we then implement these safety measures and/or mitigations as necessary.

Risk Assessments are the lynchpin of health and safety and are part and parcel of how we now operate. The point of completing a risk assessment is to help you think about how you reduce the likelihood of something going wrong and identify anything you need to do to support this. Health & Safety is sometimes seen as a 'tick boxing' exercise, creating unnecessary paperwork or preventing people from doing things. The reality is that failure to have risk assessments in place or to follow what is documented in them can put people in harm's way and, in certain circumstances, invalidate our insurance - so it is something we take seriously.

During this year we had to recommend the closure the Parish Centre and Hall. This had a huge impact on what we could do in the parish, but it was absolutely necessary to ensure the safety of users. Initially we had an infestation of rats that were running around in all areas of the building and got up into the roof areas. While they were removed, both sides of the building were shut as the poisons were harmful to humans. After this we reviewed the use of both sides, cleaned the Hall completely and when it was deemed safe to be used it was reopened. The Parish Centre and Kitchen were not reopened as the rats had disturbed the asbestos in the ceilings, resulting in asbestos fibres in both areas. These rooms have been sealed and remain closed until the issue is resolved. The bricks above the door to the Parish Centre were removed as they were loose and coming away.

Currently we are looking into purchasing a defibrillator for the church premises and also increasing the lighting in the car parks to improve safety in these areas. Thank you to those groups/individuals who take responsibility for creating a safe parish environment, by doing the right thing, even when it's not an easy choice.

David Bentley
Health & Safety

Safeguarding

“The Catholic Church in England and Wales is striving towards a culture of safeguarding where all are safe from harm and abuse and where every person is encouraged and enabled to enjoy the fullness of life in Jesus Christ through the prayerful, caring, nurturing, supportive and protective endeavours of the Catholic community, both individually and collectively.”

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (established early 2021)

Safeguarding is everyone’s concern and is an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church. Our policy covers the practices and processes in place to ensure the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable persons who use St Joseph’s Church, The Most Holy Name Church, Parish Centre, Hall, First Committee Room and/or Priory Grounds, or who are involved in parish activities.

Whilst many improvements have been made since our last report, safeguarding is a continual process which requires regular monitoring to ensure a safe environment. There are quarterly meetings with Fr Bob to review safeguarding in the parish, there is an annual review of all safeguarding risk assessments and there are annual safeguarding awareness training sessions with relevant groups/individuals. Per our Safeguarding Policy, procedures are reviewed every twelve months.

This year the Diocese is subject to a Safeguarding Audit. This will happen during November and reach out to all parishes.

Thank you to all the volunteers who reactivated their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. We now have 79 volunteers with this safeguarding clearance working in church ministries and in our parish community.

The welfare of a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at all times paramount, and takes precedence over all other considerations. The parish has a special responsibility to these individuals, to keep them safe from harm. This means that anyone organising activities in which they participate are obliged to put in place appropriate safeguarding measures.

We appreciate the time our clergy, staff and volunteers give to receive the appropriate training and to study our awareness materials and code of conduct. This is key to helping us nurture a positive attitude towards safeguarding and maintain a good safeguarding culture in our parish, enabling all to flourish. Please remember Safeguarding underpins every ministry in the parish.

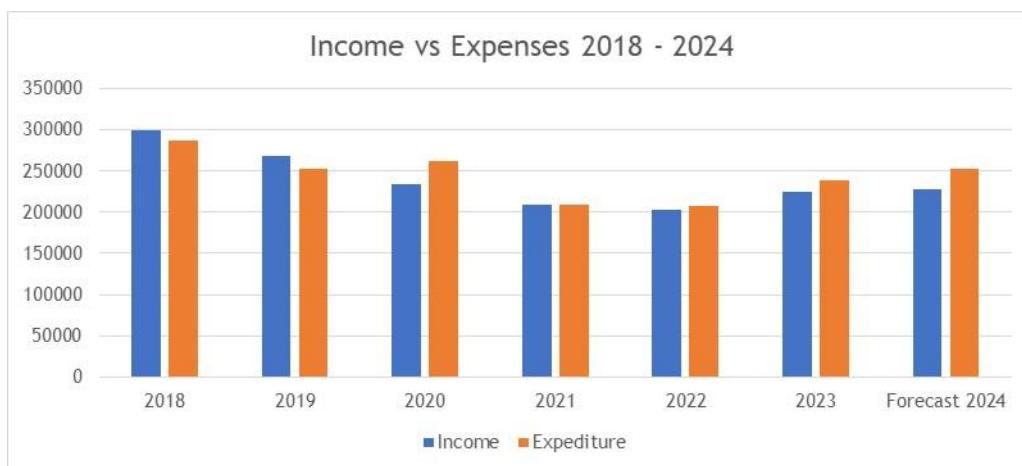
Gillian Sugrue & Simon Hardcastle
Safeguarding

Finance Committee

YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023

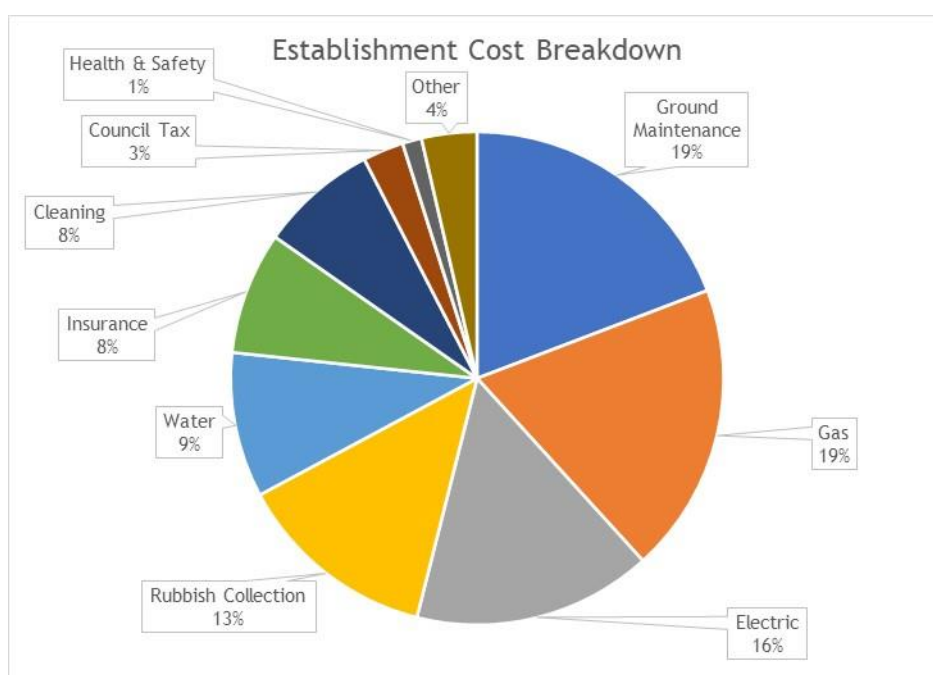
Accounts to 31st March 2023 show a small operating surplus of £5,276 after receiving legacies and donations of £20,000. Our Events fundraising was down from just under £30,000 to £8,678 mainly due to the 200 Club not operating during the year and not holding a Parish Day. Without the legacies/donations received during the year we would have shown an operating deficit close to £15,000.

The budget prepared for the current year to 31st March 2024 is showing an operating deficit of circa £25,000.



Since the pandemic our operating expenses have increased and exceed our offertory income.

In the main this is as a result of the increase in utility costs (gas, electric and water) and a higher Diocesan Levy.



Our utility bills have increased with inflation and make up 44% of our operating costs.

Clearly such annual deficits cannot be sustained and we urgently need to find ways of increasing our income.

GIFT AID

Thanks are again due to parishioners for their continued generosity. The low percentage of donations which are gift aided is still disappointing and it would make a considerable difference to us if the tax already paid by donors could be reclaimed for the parish. Gift aiding donations increase income by 25%, making each pound donated worth £1.25. If you do not currently gift aid your donations it would be greatly appreciated if you would consider doing so. If you need to know how, please contact the Parish Office.

EVENTS INCOME

The Autumn Raffle was again a valuable source of income and I hope you will again support Celia Tobin and her team when they prepare this year's event. After Cathy Vennix stepped down as the 200 Club organiser the parish lost a good income stream but we are delighted that Alistair Coulthard has now got the club up and running again and prizes have already been won. We would really love to get the numbers in the club back to 200 so if you have not already joined, please consider it. Adrian Foy organised our annual St Joseph's Golf Society Day which reached capacity for both the golf and presentation dinner. The weather was glorious and much enjoyment was had both on and off the golf course.

THE FURNITURE MARKET

The Furniture Market continues to be a reliable and important source of income for the parish. It has been running for nearly 50 years. In the past financial year, the hard-working volunteers who run the market contributed £14,600 towards the running costs of the parish. A similar amount was donated to mostly local charities. We are grateful to our volunteer who uses Facebook very successfully to attract buyers to come to the market. Our sincere thanks go to all those who work at the market on a Saturday morning, and who collect and deliver furniture in the furniture market van.

CEMETERY MEMORIAL WALL

Vaults for ashes and Memorial Plaques can now be purchased by parishioners and forms are available from the Parish Office. These are being taken up on a regular basis.

DENHAM

The Most Holy Name Church in Denham is in urgent need of external refurbishment and redecoration work.

STREAMING OF MASSES

We continue to fund the streaming of Masses which we know is so important to those who are unable to attend in person.

PARISH CENTRE/HALL

This building has been increasingly showing its age and there have been several serious health and safety issues which have continued into this year. At the time of writing this report, both the Parish Centre and Kitchen have had to be closed and no new hirings are being accepted for the Hall.

Whether by repairs or, more likely, by a rebuild there will be a need for large sums to be raised. This will be the subject of a detailed report which will be produced later this year after discussions with the Diocese.

APPEALS

During this financial year, parishioners supported a good many appeals and second collections which amounted to £15,900. This generosity is a testament to our faith in action as we support the varied work of the wider Church, Catholic associations, charitable organisations and projects for those less fortunate than ourselves.

THANKS

A big thank you to Fathers Bob, Jerome, Maurice, John Mc, Martin and John W for their support and spiritual guidance throughout the past year.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Joan Barham for the many and varied duties she performs in an obliging and good-natured manner, as well as keeping us all informed about everything that is happening in the parish via the newsletter.

To Simon Hardcastle who has done a sterling job as our treasurer whilst also handling matters relating to the hire of the hall, as well as fulfilling the role of parish safeguarding representative.

To Malcolm Johnstone for all his work on parish property matters and who, with all his helpers, does such important work on the London and Slough Run.

To David Bentley for taking care of repairs and maintenance as well as health and safety matters which has been particularly challenging this year.

To Robert Thompson for ensuring that all our heating equipment is regularly serviced and repaired.

To Damian Barsoum for looking after our gift aid scheme and dealing with the necessary administration.

A vote of thanks to Roseleen Cowie and Amanda Vaughan who are manning the Reception Desk on a part time basis, to Susan Lever for her help with the church registers and to Gillian Sugrue for her work on safeguarding. Our gratitude also goes to Janet Bridden, Adrian Keenan and Lester D'Souza who volunteer their time to serve as Registrars for weddings.

Many thanks to Celia Tobin who is currently organising our much-needed Autumn Raffle; to Mary Forsyth for the volunteer admin support she provides across many and varied areas of our parish activities; to Aidan Foy for running our Golf Day and to Jane Derry for the sales of apple juice produced from the orchard.

We are very grateful to all the volunteers who give willingly of their time to keep our churches in good order and looking so beautiful, particularly for special occasions and celebrations.

Apologies to those not mentioned by name but it is true that we are blessed in having many willing and talented hands. Long may it continue.

Kevin Murphy

Chairman, St Joseph's Finance Committee

The logo for Gift Aid, featuring the word "giftaid" in a black, cursive script font. The word "gift" is in a smaller, lighter font weight than "aid".

MAKING YOUR DONATIONS GO FURTHER

Gift Aid is a very important way by which we can increase our income. If you are a UK tax payer, we can increase any offering or donation you make by reclaiming income tax from HM Revenue and Customs, under the government's Gift Aid scheme.

The government tops up your offering by 25p for every £1 at no extra cost to you, the giver.

In 2022/2023, we received an extra £28,362 for the parish from standing orders and offering envelopes as a result of this scheme. Gift Aid Declaration Forms are short and only take a few minutes to complete. They can be downloaded from the parish website and paper copies are available from the church porch or Parish Office.

Parish Gift Aid Co-Ordinator

Damian Barsoum

giftaid@stjosephs.org.uk

Financial Statement

YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2023

	<i>Budget to March 2024</i>	<i>12 Months to March 2023</i>	<i>12 Months to March 2022</i>
<u>OPERATING INCOME & EXPENSES</u>			
<u>INCOME</u>			
Offertory	105,193	118,670	108,915
Thro' Parish			
Thro' Diocese	58,998	48,694	50,399
Thro' Donation Station	3,232		
Tax Refunds	30,333	28,362	22,852
	<u>197,756</u>	<u>195,726</u>	<u>182,166</u>
Rental Income	6,040	8,349	100
Candles and Boxes	3,108	0	428
Furniture Market	16,503	14,600	11,750
Together in Faith	2,460	2,706	42
Grants	0	3,164	4,704
Stole Fees	100	267	400
Legacies and Donations	2,460	0	2,660
Repository	0	0	0
	<u>30,671</u>	<u>29,086</u>	<u>20,084</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>228,427</u>	<u>224,812</u>	<u>202,250</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			
Liturgical	9,140	7,192	10,531
Catechatics/Pastoral			
Domestic	380	114	3,569
Establishment	66,700	55,234	55,259
Insurance	5,000	4,645	4,341
Office	9,180	8,156	5,706
Travel	0	0	0
Carmelites	24,000	24,000	28,511
Personnel	48,500	51,460	47,282
Property/Maintenance	19,288	18,253	15,421
Fixed Assets	0	0	0
Repository	476	1,329	561
Diocese Levy	69,606	59,502	33,497
NCF/CES/CYS Levies	1,000	1,775	1,775
Misc/Donations	0	7,876	844
Interest			
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	<u>253,270</u>	<u>239,536</u>	<u>207,297</u>
Surplus/Deficit of Income Over Expenditure	<u>-24,843</u>	<u>-14,724</u>	<u>-5,047</u>
<u>Events Fundraising Account</u>			
Income	45,000	22,103	46,337
Expenditure	17,000	13,425	16,628
Surplus/Deficit of Income Over Expenditure	<u>28,000</u>	<u>8,678</u>	<u>29,709</u>

CAPITAL ACCOUNT

Balance b/f at 1 April	467,817	453,863	360,937
Legacy		20,000	68,264
Property Sale			
Property Sale Interest			0
Events Account Fundraising	28,000	8,678	29,709
Balance of Operating Costs	-24,843	-14,724	-5,047
	<u>470,973</u>	<u>467,817</u>	<u>453,862</u>
Represented by:			
Cash and Bank Balance	-1,008	10,819	12,408
2nd Collection Accruals	-140	-140	-4,876
Events Account Balance	133,372	105,372	96,694
Property Sales Account	338,749	338,749	338,749
Diocesan Central Account	0	13,017	10,888
	<u>470,973</u>	<u>467,817</u>	<u>453,863</u>

Simon Hardcastle

Treasurer



*We are here to help.
Get in touch.*

ST JOSEPH'S PRIORY

01753 886581

PARISH OFFICE

01753 886581 + Press 1

office@stjosephs.org.uk

www.stjosephs.org.uk

*The Parish Office is open on Mondays from 9am until 12 noon
and Fridays from 10am until 12 noon*

ST JOSEPH'S FURNITURE MARKET

stjosephsfurnituremarket@gmail.com

The market is open on Saturdays from 9am until 12:30pm

ST VINCENT DE PAUL

If you, or someone you know, is in need, please get in contact with us, on a totally confidential basis, on 07942 270969

Sacraments

All the catechists have now been brought together to form a Parish Sacramental Preparation Team. They, along with our priests, will work alongside each other to teach and support those children, young people and adults wishing to receive the Sacraments. It has also been decided that we will move to family-based catechesis, where parents will be actively involved in the preparation of their children for the Sacraments, so they can accompany them as they grow in understanding on their journey of faith.

BAPTISM FORMATION *(Christine Cornwell)*

We are pleased to report that Baptismal formation sessions for parents seeking Baptism for their children will recommence in November 2023. Parents interested in joining the sessions should please contact the Parish Office. The formation follows the model of family catechesis. Families will attend the 9am Sunday Mass on three consecutive Sundays. This is followed by a time of formation and sharing our faith together for the parents whilst the older siblings of those being baptised will enjoy their own activities focused on the sacrament of Baptism.

ST JOSEPH'S PARISH FIRST HOLY COMMUNION *(Celia Tobin)*

28 children participated in our parish First Communion Preparation in 2023. The sessions took place on Sundays during the 9am Mass from January through to May. The children were invited for a blessing by the priest before going to the Parish Centre with a parent/carer for their lesson, re-joining the congregation at the Offertory for the rest of Mass. They used the "I Belong" book which contains lively, easy-to-read, colourful material which reflects the world we live in and helps the children understand the teaching at their own level. The 'Family Time' section at the end of each chapter has ideas for things to do together - simple, practical ways to apply the teaching in everyday life. It was great to have parent engagement. The children celebrated their First Reconciliation on 4th March and received their First Holy Communion at the end of April as the King's Coronation was at the beginning of May.

ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL FIRST HOLY COMMUNION *(Nan Jacobson)*

This year 25 children from St Joseph's School made their First Holy Communion in June. The initial focus was on preparing the children for their First Reconciliation which took place in Lent. Just before the Easter holidays, they learned about the Passover and after Easter they celebrated New Life in the Cross. The emphasis of the lessons from then on was on the Eucharist and preparing the children for their First Holy Communion Mass. The day itself was joyful and we were blessed with good weather for our celebration afterwards. Thank you to everyone who helped make the day so special.

CONFIRMATION PROGRAMME (*Shelley Rahman Haley*)

36 young people from the parish, including many from our travelling community, were confirmed by Bishop David in a joyful celebration on 12th June. Preparation for the sacrament had begun in late January. We based our sessions on the course “Truth” by Danny Curtin, which we had used successfully last year. It is a good, simple, relevant course with a focus on the relationship of the young Christian with Our Lord Jesus Christ and on the challenges of living as a young Christian in 21st Century Western society. The course follows a “See - Judge - Act” approach, leading the young people through a process of considering situations in their own lives, reflecting on these situations in the light of the teachings of Christ and of the Church, and then deciding what that means for them and the way they intend to live. As with last year, the course was relatively short, consisting of nine sessions run on alternate Sundays during the two hours leading up to 5:30pm Mass, which the confirmands then attended, joining in with Mass ministries, including reading and passing collection baskets.

A highlight was the Blaze retreat day, held in Milton Keynes and hosted by NYMO. Our young people listened to a hilarious talk by Deacon Liam Lynch (Chaplain of St Joan of Arc School, Rickmansworth) with a serious underlying question - what is it that stops us from doing the right thing, even if we want to do it? They joined in with new music, a very useful session about the Saints and Bishop David’s Question Time. They also had the opportunity for individual reconciliation - and many attended. The Core Catechesis Team were ably assisted, not only by the parish volunteer administration team but by a small number of volunteers from amongst this year’s parent group, who showed great commitment by putting themselves forward to accompany the young people on this important phase of their life’s journey.

The Core Team wishes to express sincere thanks to the clergy, especially Fr John McGowan who attended many sessions and supported the catechists and Fr Jerome who got to know the young people, accompanying us to both the Flame Festival at Wembley and the Blaze Retreat. Finally, grateful thanks are due to our Prior, Fr Bob for his kindness and support, especially in helping to run catch-up sessions.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION (*Jane Roberts*)

Wedding preparation courses are run for two/three couples at a time. We meet weekly for a total of three evenings held at our home, and we try to create a relaxed environment for the young couples who are maybe unsure as to what to expect from the course.

The evening begins with a prayer, followed by the couples introducing themselves. At this point we give them an outline of the course - its aims and what to expect from the meetings. We always emphasise from the outset, that we are here to support them; not to judge or criticise them, nor instruct them how to run their lives. Most importantly we confirm that anything discussed between us remains

confidential and is not repeated to anyone else. We wish them to trust us. We share some of our own experiences, the highs and lows, to put them at ease in ours and each other's company. We express our hope that they will find the course fulfilling and helpful for their futures together.

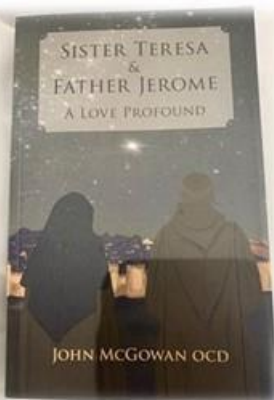
The format of the programme is explained and we aim to work through two topics each evening. They will have been asked to bring the course book with them to follow the topics. They watch a DVD about each topic in turn and are encouraged, after each section, to split up into their respective pairs to allow them to review what they have watched.

Halfway through we break for coffee and biscuits, to enable them to share their thoughts together as a group. At this point we encourage them to find time when they are at home, to discuss between themselves and follow up on matters which have arisen during the session. We explain this is not homework, but a useful opportunity for some meaningful soul searching and shared enlightenment to help them to lead a loving future together. By seeing the others point of view and sharing their possible concerns will help them cement their commitment to each other.

We personally have found this an enriching course and meeting the young couples has given us such hope for their futures at a time when outside influences are at their most distracting and demanding.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS (RCIA) *(Roseleen Cowie/Fr Martin)*

We invite those interested in learning more about the Catholic Faith to join us. You may have a child in school you want to support; are married to or about to be married to a Catholic; were baptised but never received Confirmation; are wanting to return to the Church; come from another Christian denomination of another faith or have not had a faith. The programme is open to all. Please come and sample the programme. The weekly meetings take place on Monday evenings at the Priory. Please contact the Parish Office if you would like to learn more.



Fr John McGowan has written a book. It is a novel about the friendship between St Teresa of Ávila, who founded our Order and the first Provincial of our Order. It is easy to read and will help the reader to know better the two protagonists, especially Fr Jerome Gratian who is hardly known at all. The book is written in part to help him become better known. His process of beatification has begun but for it to make further progress he will have to be better known. This book is an effort to do that. It is available to buy from the Repository priced at £14.99. Enjoy.

Liturgies

ROSARY CIRCLE (*Christine Cornwell*)

During the years of the pandemic the Rosary Circle continued to meet faithfully online to pray for the needs of our world during that difficult time. Our numbers increased and we were able to retain members in the group who had moved away from the parish. However, after careful discernment and discussion with the Carmelite Community, we decided to return to praying the Rosary in the Oratory once a week. Whilst we will maintain our Rosary Group via Zoom on Tuesdays at 7:30pm, we will also pray the Rosary on Thursdays at 7:30pm in the Oratory. All are most welcome to join us. Please contact the Parish Office for further details.



ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CEMETERY MEMORIAL WALL

Our Memorial Wall has 114 vaults for the interment of ashes.

Each vault offers a resting place for two sets of cremated remains and is sealed with a black granite plaque, with a gold inscription to commemorate the deceased.

There are also 80 memorial plaques mounted on the wall, also made of black granite and inscribed in gold. These offer space to commemorate one deceased relative or friend, whether or not they are interred in the cemetery.

All vaults and plaques are leased in perpetuity.
Application Forms for Vaults and Plaques
are available from the Parish Office.

Ministries

ALTAR SERVERS (*Sheena McCormick/Mary Forsyth/Elaine Bentley*)

We have been blessed to have regular altar servers at our 9am, 11am and Denham Masses each week. The commitment by the young people to be trained and to assist our priests is much appreciated. Special thanks to the dedicated servers who say 'Yes' to serve at Holy Week and on other special occasions such as the First Holy Communion and Confirmation sacramental celebrations. Thank you to the parents who enable their children to serve.

We would love to have more young people participate in this ministry and would welcome new servers for any Mass from the January after they have made their First Communion or at any time for older young people. Please get in touch via the Parish Office or speak to one of the priests.

FUNERAL ASSISTANTS (*Joan Barham*)

In the absence of a Master of Ceremonies or Adult Altar Servers, we have set up a small team of men and women to assist the priests at the celebration of funerals. This involves arriving about half an hour before the Funeral Mass/Service, helping the celebrant to prepare for the ceremony, setting up the church, being a welcoming presence for grieving families, greeting the funeral director and generally being on hand to help out as required. During the funeral they support the priest as needed and prepare the incense. Afterwards, they tidy up and clear everything away. It would be good to expand the team, so if you are interested, please speak with Fr Bob. Guidelines have been written and training is offered.

READERS AND EXTRA-ORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

(*Christine Cornwell/Sarah Hampel*)

Thank you to all our Readers and Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who have ministered throughout the year at St Joseph's and at The Most Holy Name. A special word of thanks to those who co-ordinate the rotas for each of our Masses. Earlier this year Fr Martin, assisted by Roseleen Cowie, led a day of reflection for both Readers and Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion which was much appreciated and everyone was recommissioned at a special Mass in the Oratory.

CHILDREN'S LITURGY (*Kathy Slattery*)

Children's Liturgy takes place during term time at the 9am Mass where all children and young people are invited to come out after the opening hymn until the end of the Intercessory Prayers. Children gather together in four different age groups - Pre-School-Reception, Years 1-2, Years 3-6, and Years 7+. Here they share the Gospel, after which the reading is explained to them at a level appropriate to their age. After the reading, they have the opportunity to ask questions and explore the Word at a deeper level.

In the youngest group parents are encouraged to let the children stay alone once they are in Reception and feel comfortable. All other groups are for children/young people (no need for parents to attend) and are staffed appropriately. This is a well-earned chance to enjoy the Mass in peace!

The younger groups take part in a mix of activities - colouring, puzzles, songs, etc to bring the story to life, whilst the older groups are helped to think about the real meaning of the reading and how they can relate it to their lives. When the discussions and activities are finished, the children return to resume the Liturgy with the rest of the congregation, with Years 3-6 helping take up the Offertory and the youngest group gathering on the altar to show what they have been doing.

Last year we had Journeys through Advent and Lent celebrating each week leading up to these special times, Bambinelli Sunday, Christingle, etc.

On Palm Sunday we offered outdoor Interactive Stations of the Cross during liturgy time. This was available throughout the rest of the day for parishioners to attend.

We are a really friendly team of about 20 people who are involved in leading and supporting the weekly sessions. We have two social events during the year (Mass followed by a shared supper) and are always keen to have new people join us. We have some new ideas for group activities this year - watch the newsletter for more details. We feel like one big family, both young and old supporting and encouraging each other. Please do come and join us after 9am Mass for coffee and biscuits and to make new friends.

9AM CHOIR (*Nan Jacobson*)

The children's choir at 9am resumed in September 2022 after a long break. We were so delighted to be back! We have up to 20 young people join us on Sunday mornings and would welcome your child if they would like to sing or play an instrument. Please see Nan after Mass.

11AM CHOIR (*Mary Keenan*)

The 11am Sunday Mass has been without music for some time. Thanks to Fr Jerome there are now almost 20 enthusiastic parishioners who provide music to support the liturgy on the first Sunday of each month. Singers and musicians who might like to join this friendly group are asked to contact Fr Jerome for more information.

11AM YOUTH MASS (*Fr Jerome*)

The parish began a Youth Mass on 24th July. We had the second one on 8th October and hope to have it more regularly. Thanks to Richard Cottle, who has offered to help train the young people. Some of the young people, with the support of their parents, have formed a Youth Choir which is still growing. We presently have about 12 young people in the choir.

We welcome young people gifted in singing and playing instruments to join this group. We would also like to encourage young people to be readers.

HOLY NAME CHOIR (*Richard Cottle*)

We have an informal but highly regarded choir here and Richard has specially composed the 'Denham Mass' parts for this lovely part of the parish. Richard also plays on Holy Days at St Joseph's as well as combining singers for many special services; one such lovely Mass occurs on Holy Thursday where we will sometimes have 22 voices in the choir. For any more information please get in touch with Richard via the Parish Office.

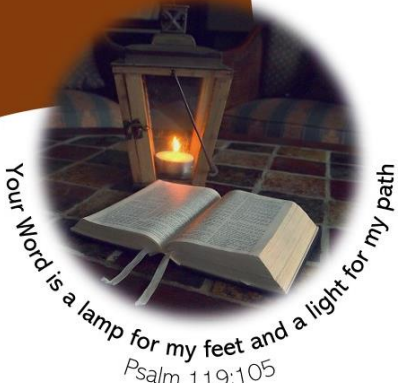
EMMAUS

Opening the Scriptures

South Bucks
Pastoral Area

2024 TALKS

Wednesdays
7:30pm to 9pm



Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path
Psalm 119:105

10th January
'The Word was made flesh' (Jn 1:14):
The Word of God as Foundation of Reality
Speaker: Barbara Reed Mason

7th February
The Seven Last Words - New Insights
Speaker: Fr Timothy Radcliffe
(based on his book)

6th March
The Suffering in the Book of Job
Speaker: Mgr Seán Healey

10th April
'You are my witnesses' (Isa 43:10):
Chosen and Sent
Speaker: Fr Pius Amoako

1st May
The Holy Spirit and Evangelisation
Speaker: Michelle Moran

5th June
Laws of Purification:
Should They Still Apply Today?
Speaker: Fleur Dorrell

3rd July
St Daniel Comboni –
Scripture Yesterday and Today
Speaker: Fr Ruben Padilla Rocha

4th September
St Paul and Prayer
Speaker: Dr Sean Ryan

2nd October
Moses and the Burning Bush –
Revelation of God's Name
Speaker: Deacon Tony Rowley

6th November
'He read from the book from
dawn till noon' (Nehemiah 8:3):
How to Read the Bible
Speaker: Charles Whitehead

4th December
The Story of Ruth
Speaker: Dr Jessie Rogers

REGISTER NOW
www.stjosephs.org.uk/Emmaus

Growing in Our Faith

SECULAR CARMELITES *(Ivor Doherty)*

The Carmelite Secular Order is an association of lay people which pursues the path to holiness in the circumstances of their daily lives, inspired and assisted by the spirituality of the Teresian charism. It is an integral part of the Carmelite family and is open to men and women, married and single. A branch of the London Region of Secular Carmelites meets at St Joseph's on the third Saturday of each month from 10:45am until 2:30pm. If you are interested in growing in your commitment as a Catholic and in learning more about Carmelite spirituality you would be welcome to meet with us and find out more.

This year, one of our members took her final promise, whilst a further three took their first promise and one member was formally brought into formation. These are the steps in belonging to the Carmelite Order as lay people alongside our sisters and brothers the Nuns and Friars OCD. As 2023 is the 150th anniversary of the birth of St Thérèse of Lisieux, we have been studying her book 'The Story of a Soul' and continuing to read from 'The Life of St Teresa of Avila'. After studying these texts and sharing some social time over lunch we usually retire to the Oratory for meditation, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and evening prayer.

EVANGELISATION GROUP *(Maureen Connell/Christine Cornwell/Charles Whitehead)*

The Evangelisation Forum has continued to meet in the past year. In February Fr Jerome joined the Community and met with us. His vision was to hold talks on scripture to look at the way the scriptures impact our daily lives. We worked closely with him to build up a list of potential speakers, topics for the sessions and to facilitate this project. This initiative is called "Emmaus - Opening the Scriptures" with a subtitle of "Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path" Psalm 119-105.

This has now become a South Bucks Pastoral Area initiative with representatives from seven of our ten parishes forming the "Emmaus Core Team". We are working well together and already have a full schedule of monthly talks for both 2023 and 2024. More than 200 people are registered with us. For further information on our upcoming talks or to register please visit www.stjosephs.org.uk/Emmaus.

WALSINGHAM PILGRIMAGE *(Christine Cornwell/Fr John)*

In June Fr John McGowan led a pilgrimage to the National Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk. Here we joined the Annual Carmelite Pilgrimage, where Fr Matt Blake OCD gave the talk. This was followed by Holy Mass in the Chapel of Reconciliation. After lunch, in the beautiful grounds of the shrine, we walked the holy mile into Walsingham Village where some attended Adoration at the Church of the Annunciation whilst others visited the Church of England Shrine and museum.

Outreach

THE LONDON & SLOUGH RUN (*Eugene Walsh/Malcolm Johnstone*)



The London & Slough Run

The London & Slough Run has several features. Here at St Joseph's, a team of volunteers prepares food for the homeless every Monday from

midday for a couple of hours and the van then leaves with a local crew that evening (19:30 to 23:00). We run two feed stations at Temple and Waterloo distributing soup, sandwiches and goodies. We are always glad to welcome new volunteers; the commitment is either (or both!) each Monday at midday for food preparation and, for the van crew who go up to town, it is usually one Monday evening per month. If you would like to join us then please let us know via admin@thelondonandsloughrun.org. We regularly provide for up to 200 people each week.

We also continue to provide to needy families and community organisations in Slough. We operate a food re-distribution centre in Slough where we bring donated foodstuffs from local supermarkets, sort and re-distribute early the following day. The space was kindly donated rent free by the landlord and is being manned by volunteers based in Slough and the surrounding area. The number of families in need is sadly increasing as the cost-of-living crisis continues to take a toll.

If you would like to contribute financially you can donate via our website at www.thelondonandsloughrun.org or you can make a cheque payable to "The London & Slough Run" and drop it through the letterbox at the Priory. Given the increased need, we are running our two vans even more these days and we rely exclusively on donations. We do not have any employees and all donations go directly to fund the operation. Please see the parish website and weekly newsletter on how you can support us each week with food donations. PLEASE DO NOT BRING ANYTHING OTHER THAN FOOD. We are very grateful for the generous ongoing support from parishioners and many other local people in terms of sandwiches and other food donations. Thank you for your generosity - it is making a big difference to the lives of many.

"The harvest is great but the labourers are few."

We have had a good year for new recruits and we were delighted to welcome new drivers and several new volunteers, all of whom have significantly reduced the average age of the team! It is heartening to see young people step forward to get involved. The need for volunteers is ongoing so don't hesitate to get in touch if you are interested. Whether you want to "*live the gospel*" or simply lend a hand and a friendly ear to your fellow man on the run it is a wonderful experience.

SLOUGH HOMELESS OUR CONCERN (*Ray Waite*)



During the pandemic Slough Homeless Our Concern (SHOC) continued to provide a service and covered for other local services that had to close. There are currently 150 people registered with SHOC, with 30 to 40 people attending each day. All our day centre services are fully operational.

Working with our partner charity Trinity we have 10 units of supported housing in Slough, and our aim is to increase this to provide a pathway to eliminating homelessness in Slough.

SHOC would welcome a team from St Joseph's who could commit to providing a hot lunch for 30 to 40 people once a week or once a fortnight. Full kitchen facilities are available, so just bring food and cook.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL (*Kasia Misiewicz*)



Our parish SVP group is a branch of the global and Christian charity network of St Vincent de Paul. It has always been dedicated to helping those in need by providing them with practical assistance. Having been present in St Joseph's Parish for over 40 years (with a varying number of members) we are still motivated by faith, visit vulnerable, disadvantaged or isolated people in our community and address the growing loneliness by offering friendship and practical support.

As society evolves - the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis - we have adapted our mission but retaining its essence in seeking and serving those who might be forgotten by simple acts of being present, to listen, befriend and engage. It is this person-to-person contact that often brings much-needed social interaction whilst also allowing us to identify when and what kind of practical help is needed: collection of shopping, transport to hospital/medical appointments, Mass, parish events, etc. And *"Nothing is small in the eyes of God"* (St Therese of Lisieux).

Within our mission to the sick, dying and bereaved, we have started to offer a service of end-of-life companionship to the dying and their families. In this call to be the voice of the voiceless, we try our best to represent those who struggle to fight for their rights and liaise with other networking individuals, groups, organisations on a totally confidential basis. *"The fact that we can speak out against injustice and for those suffering, it means that we are living out our mission."* (Helen O'Shea, Past National President).

We reach out to people of all faiths and whilst most are parishioners we do go beyond and reach out to adjacent areas. This includes the Catholic Workers Farm, which we support and provide supplies to the destitute refugees and their children who stay there.

During the past 12 months, we have made 670 social contacts (either in person or over the telephone), made around 80 collections of food or medicine for the housebound, provided transport on 128 occasions and practical assistance (such as food and clothing donations) more than 20 times.

Over and above these everyday activities, our SVP group has undertaken the following in the past year:

- Holding a Pancake Morning on Shrove Tuesday in the Parish Centre.
- Arranging Mass with the Sacrament of Anointing during both Lent and Advent.
- Working with St Joseph's School to distribute hampers collected by the pupils and staff to those most in need at Christmas.
- Arranging the donation of Giving Tree gifts from the Children's Liturgy Group and delivering them to the less fortunate families in our area.
- In conjunction with the Slough SVP Group and using parishioners' donations we helped by making 50 parcels for Ukrainian orphans located in Poland destined to arrive for Christmas 2022.
- Providing SVP homeless packs, containing essential winter supplies, to the London & Slough Run.

With awareness of the need to be united in prayer and action and with the message of St Vincent de Paul himself that *"Having charity in our hearts and words isn't everything. It has to be put into action - only then is it perfect"*, we hope to continue our participation in the mission of service and communion with the most vulnerable around and amongst us in times ahead.

CAFOD (*Ged Nolan*)



CAFOD is the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development and is the official aid agency for the Catholic Church in England and Wales, guided by the values of compassion, solidarity, and hope. Together, with the help of our volunteers, we put our faith into action to help our

sisters and brothers living in extreme poverty to reach their full potential, regardless of religion or culture.

We believe that everyone in the world has the right to live their lives with dignity. That is why we work through the local Catholic Church and other partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East to fight poverty and injustice, wherever the need is greatest.

CAFOD is a member of Caritas International - a group of over 160 Catholic agencies from around the world - known as 'the helping hand of the Church'. Because we work through the local partners, we can reach people and places that others cannot.

CAFOD is a member of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC). When large-scale disasters hit countries without the capacity to respond, the DEC brings

together fifteen leading UK aid charities - including CAFOD - to raise funds quickly and efficiently.

You can help by:

- Giving a five-minute talk at Mass when we have Harvest and Lent Family Fast Day appeals.
- Organising a petition signing, postcard action or another campaign event after Masses.
- Working with other groups to encourage others to act.
- Sharing the news about what campaigning is doing with others in your community.
- Writing to Government and/or your local MP about current campaign issues.
- Becoming a Catholic Schools Volunteer (either Primary or Secondary or both) following suitable training.

There is a way you can use the time you have to help us make a difference, whether it's a few free minutes in the day, days in the week, weeks in the year, or more! Many of the opportunities above can be tailored to fit into your schedule. When you volunteer for CAFOD, you have the chance to enable our parish community to act for global justice and put the Gospel into practice.

Whether you donate, campaign, download prayers or volunteer in the parish you are saving lives and helping some of the world's poorest people. For further information visit www.cafod.org.uk or contact Ged via the Parish Office.

APF MILL HILL MISSION (*Peter Freeman*)



Today. Tomorrow. **Together.**

There are 170 Missio Red Box holders in St Joseph's Parish who have generously raised £40,079 in their Red Box donations since 2004. The annual donations have rapidly increased over the years with the best year being 2019 when donations totalled £5,110.

Since then, because of Covid the economic downturn and the increasing use of credit card transactions to replace cash usage, donations have steadily decreased to the extent that in 2023 for the nine months ending 30th September only £804 has been received. It is essential that Red Box holders continue to support Missio's missionary work overseas with their donations of their small change and unwanted foreign coinage but it is hoped that they will augment their donations by a standing order payment and an appeal to this end will be made at parish Masses in the near future. If you would like to join our parish Red Box scheme, please contact Peter via the Parish Office. For more details of the APF Mill Hill Mission please see www.stjosephs.org.uk/outreach.

THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE (*Maureen Burrows*)



We have eight members and meet on the third Wednesday of the month at 2pm in the First Committee Room. We have been out twice for lunch and enjoyed a lovely fish and chip lunch at our Chairman's home in September. We planted an apple tree in the orchard in March to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee. It was blessed by Fr John Williamson who then joined us for tea and cake. We held a Branch Meeting at St Joseph's in March which

began with Mary's Way of the Cross in the church, followed by lunch in the Parish Centre and our meeting.

Doreen Pooley, our Chairman, attended the WUCWO general assembly in Assisi in May. All the attendees were invited to an audience with Pope Francis in Rome before heading off to Assisi. Three of us will be attending the Catholic Women's League AGM at the end of October. We look forward to meeting other members from across the country.

We have also been part of a national project to help the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT). Members are providing backpacks containing essentials for prisoners leaving prisons with nothing. They are also making 'Cross in Your Pockets' for chaplains to give to prisoners.



TRAIDCRAFT (*Eileen Carkett*)



TRAIDCRAFT
Fighting poverty through trade

Traidcraft, the firm where we sourced our Fairtrade products, stopped trading this past year due to lack of sales during Covid. Sadly, this meant we had to suspend our monthly parish Traidcraft Sales. Thank you to everyone who has bought goods over the years to support Fairtrade producers in the countries throughout the third world, who rely on being able to reach markets in the western world.

Locally you can still buy fairtrade goods from Margaret Dykes at the monthly Coffee Morning at the Village Hall in Church Road, Chalfont St Peter. These take place on the first Wednesday of the month from 10am until 12 noon.



Since 2003 our parish has supported the work of the Family Life Apostolate in the Diocese of Kumbo in the North West Province of Cameroon. Our annual appeals financed the education of approximately 200 children in primary school and 25-30 children in secondary school each year.

That's a lot of years of educating children and we are most grateful for all the assistance we have received from parishioners over the years.

More recently there has been civil war in that part of Cameroon and many children have been unable to attend school safely. Our last few appeals have therefore supported the humanitarian needs of these families.

However, much has changed in our relationship with the Diocese of Kumbo. There has been a change of Bishop in Kumbo Diocese. Ephraim Lukong died of Covid two years ago. A number of contacts we had in the Family Life Apostolate have been released from their roles. Theresia Lukong moved to Bamenda as it was not safe for her to remain in Kumbo. Finally, Sally Taylor who together with myself led the project, left the parish.

Together with the Carmelite Community and following discussion with some of our long-term supporters we therefore took the difficult decision to end the Cameroon Education Fund Appeals. Our Appeal in May was therefore our last. This raised £1,181.76 which was sent via cheque to the Mill Hill Missionaries for the account of the Family Life Apostolate. We also contributed £500 to the work of the Ephraim Lukong Foundation which was established by his family after his death to continue to support vulnerable families as Ephraim had done throughout his life.

We would like to thank the Carmelite Community and all our parishioners for their tremendous generosity, support and encouragement over the last twenty years. We really appreciate all that you have done to make such an amazing difference to the lives of so many children in the Diocese of Kumbo in Cameroon.



A Mass of thanksgiving to celebrate the wonderful relationship with Cameroon was held on 22nd October which was World Mission Sunday.

Social

REFRESHMENTS AFTER 9AM MASS (*Di Waite*)

This takes place each week currently in the First Committee Room after the 9am Family Mass except for Christmas and Easter and of course the summer when there is no 9am Mass. It is essential that we have a facility to accommodate the young families and all who attend the family service to encourage building of relationships in our parish community. We have a good team each week and could use one more helper which is a commitment of only five times a year. Please speak to the coffee team after Mass if you are interested in helping out.

REFRESHMENTS AFTER 9:30AM DENHAM MASS (*Elaine Bentley*)

We have recently started monthly refreshments after Mass on the first Sunday of each month and welcome all those who stay behind to join us. Advance offerings of cakes would be welcome and help on the day is always appreciated.

REFRESHMENTS AFTER 11AM MASS (*Brenda O’Gorman*)

Tea and coffee with biscuits are served by volunteers every Sunday in the First Committee Room. All are welcome to join us for a chat and to enjoy the company of fellow parishioners. More volunteers for the serving rota would be very welcome.

TEA IN THE POT (*Nan Jacobson*)

This is our ‘pop-up’ café which is held every Friday during term time now in the First Committee Room. Those who frequent the café are parents, carers and little ones who meet together after dropping children to local schools. They are served tea, coffee and sweet treats whilst they enjoy each other’s company. The café opens at 8:30am and closes around 10am. Everyone is most welcome to pop in.

TEA & CHAT (*Margaret Thorn*)



We continue to meet bi-monthly on the second and fourth Thursday of each month in the First Committee Room at St Joseph’s Priory between 2pm and 4pm.

We have a number of guests who attend regularly. They enjoy sharing information on numerous things for example recipes, good books, pets and events they have attended locally. The group has also

appreciated the occasional times when one of the priests has popped in.

This year a couple of our regular visitors have been unwell and the group sent out get well messages which were greatly appreciated. Sadly, a couple of people from the group died this year.

Information regarding the Tea and a Chat group is circulated via the parish newsletter and the announcements after all Masses. A poster is also on the notice board in the church porch. This year Age Concern in Chalfont St Peter also asked if they could display a poster in their office in the village which has been done.

We still have just three of us facilitating the group, which is working well at the present.

Congratulations

During Bishop David's recent visit to the parish on the Feast of St Teresa of Ávila he presented three parishioners with a Bene Merenti Medal and scroll. This honour is awarded by the Pope to people for their service to the Catholic Church.



Lucille



Tom and Christine



He also celebrated a Jubilee Mass at the Bridgettine Convent for Sr Bruna who was celebrating her Silver Jubilee.

We thank Lucille, Tom, Christine and Sr Bruna for their service and ministry and we ask God to bless them for their endeavours and humble devotion.

Church Upkeep

FLOWER ARRANGING (*Pat Lawson/Sarah Hampel*)

The flower group has been busy this year with many church events. The summer weather proved a real challenge maintaining the arrangements due to the heat. The group really appreciate the support of the parish and have been touched by the lovely comments and monetary support given to us.

The flowers at Denham are beautifully done by a small, dedicated team. This is much appreciated by the congregation who are very supportive financially.

CLEANING TEAM (*Joan Barham/Sarah Hampel*)

At St Joseph's, the church is cleaned by volunteer cleaners one week and a paid contract cleaner the next. Ahead of Easter and Christmas all the volunteer cleaners combine forces to give the church and sacristy a thorough 'deep clean'. The contract cleaner has done a superb job on restoring the parquet floor and polishes it regularly to keep it in good condition. We had a new team come on board this year but ideally would like to form another two/three teams which would enable us to dispense with the contract cleaner and reduce expenditure.

At The Most Holy Name, the church is cleaned weekly by volunteers who combine their cleaning duties with flower arranging on a six-week rota.

SACRISTIAN TEAM (*Christine Cornwell/Therese Lawton/Elaine Bentley*)

The Sacristan Team works behind the scenes to carry out a variety of duties which help the priests and ensure that all runs smoothly in the sacristy. These include:

- Preparing for Sacramental celebrations and special liturgies, including Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Easter Triduum, Advent Services, Christmas Masses, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.
- Restocking of communion breads and wine.
- Organising altar candles, votives, incense and coals.
- Laundering and repair of altar linen and cloths.
- Maintaining Holy Water fonts.
- Cleaning of church brasses.
- Looking after church banners and tabernacle penants.

At Denham the duties also include setting up and clearing away for Sunday Mass.

Thanks to those who volunteer their time to help the team keep on top of the laundry, brass cleaning and general maintenance of the sacristy.

Giving/Fundraising

FURNITURE MARKET (*David Parkhouse, Chairman*)

The Furniture Market continues to be a reliable and important source of income for the parish. In 2023 our hardworking volunteers contributed £14,600 towards our running costs. The similar amount was distributed to many other charities during the year.

For those not familiar with the market, a good variety of donated furniture is available each Saturday morning at the market located behind the cemetery, and arrangements can be made to collect and to deliver items.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who works at the market every Saturday morning and who delivers and collects items in the furniture van. If you can spare some time, more volunteers are urgently needed during the week for collections, so please help if you can. More information can be found on the parish website at www.stjosephs.org.uk/Furniture_Market.

200 CLUB (*Alistair Coulthard*)

St Joseph's 200 Club is a parish fundraiser which brings members together to take part in a monthly prize draw. After a pause at the end of 2022, we are delighted that the Club has now reopened to welcome new members. The maximum of 200 members was reached in 2021 and 2022 and we hope to build back to that level through the next year. The proceeds are shared on a 50:50 basis between parish funds and members, with four monthly prizes to be won. The annual membership year now starts in July with an entry fee of £120. As we build towards the membership limit, new entrants are invited to join at any time on a pro-rata basis. Members together have previously raised an amazing sum of £12,000 per year for parish funds. We thank all our members for their support, and look forward to welcoming new members.

CONTACTLESS GIVING

Parishioners can use the card reader which is out at all Sunday Masses in St Joseph's Church to make their offering. Simply tap to donate, choose the amount, then when asked hold your card to the reader, listen for the beep, and your payment is done. There is an option to insert your card into the payment device and enter your PIN if you prefer. You can also register your card for Gift Aid so the card reader will recognise it every time you make an offering.

**Note: Unfortunately, this facility is not available at The Most Holy Name in Denham as there is no internet connection at the church.*

Diocesan Assembly

Our Diocesan Assembly - 'Pilgrims of Hope' - took place on 15th July at Thornton College. It was a joyous, Spirit-filled day where friendships were formed, ideas were explored, thoughts were exchanged, stories of hurt and healing were told and dreams shared for the future of the Church.

Our parish had the privilege of hosting the Diocesan Prayer Vigil for the Assembly. During this special hour of prayer, we gathered together in person and online as People of God and Pilgrims of Hope to pray for the renewal of our diocese, opening our hearts to the Holy Spirit and offering our conversations and plans to the Lord.

Bishop David's diocesan challenge and imperative is summed up in his quote: *"We are not called to be navel-gazers, but a communion of communities that looks beyond themselves...and so it is imperative that we become a synodal diocese, building upon the conversations we have held over the past few months."*



St Joseph's 'Pilgrims of Hope' were Anne Benoist, Christine Cornwell, Lester D'Souza and Paul Rayner with Fr John McGowan and Joan Barham as delegates representing the South Bucks Pastoral Area.

Ahead of the Assembly, delegates participated in preparation sessions in their Pastoral Area. We followed the synodal process of "gracious speaking and gracious listening" with periods of silence to discern the will of the Holy Spirit for the future of our church. It was an open and transparent process and everyone had and still has access to all the Assembly reports and recorded webinars. The model of gracious speaking and listening is one which we are asked to adopt at the start of all our parish group gatherings prior to starting the business of our meeting.

We joined over 350 delegates, with representatives from all over the diocese. It was a diverse gathering - people hailed from inner city, town and rural parishes, of all ages, ministries, ethnicities, religious and laity.

The Assembly opened with a worship session led by Jo Boyce of CJM, followed by a plenary where we heard from Bishop David (which included a message from Pope Francis), each of the working groups (women's ministry, life of the priest, finances for mission, reaching the peripheries and lay engagement in decision making) and the youth stream. We broke out into eleven different workshop sessions before coming back together for the final plenary where we heard summaries from each of the workshop leads and the youth stream before a final worship session. Hearing the voices of the children and young people as they delivered their

feedback struck a chord with everyone, clearly and succinctly getting to the heart of matters.

In his closing address, Bishop David shared with us three key words with us:

- **Koinonia** Fellowship, working together against division;
- **Agape** Laying down our lives in love for one another;
- **Exousia** The power of God's kingdom.

He said that an action plan will be put together to address the main concerns of the listening, that every area of diocesan life will be encouraged and supported as we look to meet the changing needs of our Church and the world and that a new Diocesan Pastoral Council will be established.

All delegates have been invited to an online Assembly Update on 11th November, where progress on the various initiatives will be shared. This will include the setting up of an Assembly Taskforce. To promote synodality across the diocese and maintain the momentum from the Assembly, Bishop David has established a new vicariate and appointed an Episcopal Vicar for Pastoral Development.

Anne Benoist, Christine Cornwell, Lester D'Souza and Paul Rayner
St Joseph's Parish Assembly Delegates



SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

The XVI Ordinary General Synod of Bishops draws to a close as this report is published. For the very first time, it has included non-bishop voting members, including a number of lay-men and lay-women. Those taking part in the General Assembly

have released a **Letter to the People of God** giving thanks for their experiences. They explain the work of their time together and express the hope that everyone will be able to “concretely participate in the dynamism of missionary communion indicated by the word ‘synod’”. See www.synod.va/en.html for news.

“The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthen cooperation in all areas of her mission.

It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”

Pope Francis

Pastoral Area

St Joseph's belongs to the South Bucks Pastoral Area which comprises ten parishes. The Pastoral Area Council, which includes both lay and clergy representatives from each parish, meets in person six times per year. Every meeting begins with a time of prayer and reflection which each parish leads in turn. Standing agenda items include Communications, The Assembly and Safeguarding. Mgr Seán Healy, the Dean, hosts clergy gatherings regularly and a 'PA Exec' meets as required.

Over the past year we have forged stronger relationships between the parishes which has enabled us to work together and support one another, as follows:

- Co-ordinated Advent and Lent Services of Reconciliation to avoid clashes and enable the priests to help each other.
- Produced a Pastoral Area booklet (in digital and print form) for Holy Week and Easter Services. We plan to produce a similar one for Christmas.
- Organised a coach, used by clergy and laity, go to Northampton Cathedral for the Chrism Mass on Maundy Thursday.
- Two parishes shared a coach for their young people attending the 'Blaze' Confirmation Retreat with Bishop David.
- Most parishes have someone on the 'Emmaus Core Team' who is actively engaged in helping promote and support the talks.
- Four parishes are combining their resources to run their 2024 Confirmation preparation programme.
- Nearly all the parishes have taken up the 'One Step Challenge' where they have chosen one action to tackle arising from their Synod listening exercise.
- There is much more sharing of local events and outreach via articles in each other's newsletters.

One particular example of effective co-operation was the Diocesan Assembly Formation Sessions. Four different parishes hosted the evenings with a different facilitator each time, enabling a group of almost 40 to come together for prayerful dialogue and discernment. We had positive feedback and it was good for the local delegates to get to know one another before the larger diocesan gathering.

LOUDFence, which took place at St Teresa's, was a special highlight. LOUDfence is a survivor-led initiative and involves tying colourful ribbons and messages as a visible display of support and solidarity with those affected by abuse. We were joined by Bishop David and Bishop Alan, Anglican Bishop of Buckingham, for this unique event. During this time, a team of lay and clergy volunteer listeners were available, and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, for anyone who wished to talk.

Joan Barham

Lay Chair, South Bucks Pastoral Area

Volunteering



There is so much to value about our lively, joyful and vibrant parish, but everything that goes on here depends entirely on people who volunteer their time, energy, skills, talents and expertise - people like you.

Our community is fantastic at rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck in, but sometimes volunteers need a break, or they move away. Since the pandemic,

volunteers in many areas have decided to 'retire', often after numerous years of offering their help. We thank them all for their service and are very grateful for everything that they have done for our parish.

Volunteers are vital to what we do. If the things we value about our parish are to continue, new volunteers are urgently needed. No one should think or assume that 'someone else will do it'. Each one of us has something to offer. Whether you are new to St Joseph's or a long-standing parishioner, if you can spare some time, we are looking for help!

Starting with simple but really useful activities at Mass, to keeping the church looking beautiful, to helping in the sacristy, to getting involved in ministries like serving or music, to handing on the faith, to providing hospitality, to organising social activities, to caring for others, to fundraising, to joining parish groups, to developing links with local parishes/churches through to behind-the-scenes tasks in admin and finance.

Volunteering can bring many blessings such as making new friends, developing new skills, gaining confidence, developing your faith, and gaining a sense of achievement, all whilst contributing to parish life.

We want everyone to be able to engage with our parish community to the extent that suits them, and are open to new ideas. Please speak with one of the priests if you want to find out more about volunteer opportunities. If you would like to get involved with any of the groups or activities mentioned in this report, then please contact the Parish Office.

**"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts.
Use them well to serve one another."**

1 Peter 4:10-11



St Joseph's Priory

Austenwood Common, Chalfont St Peter, Gerrards Cross
Buckinghamshire SL9 8RY

01753 886581

www.stjosephs.org.uk
office@stjosephs.org.uk

Diocese of Northampton
Registered Charity Number 234091