



Our Lady & St Edmund of Abingdon

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Parish AGM, Sunday 19th November, parish centre, 7.30pm

INTRODUCTION *Hilary Webb, Secretary, PPC*

This last year in post-Covid times, it has been an industrious time of renewal and regeneration within the parish, with several new events and initiatives running along more established programmes and groups.



In this booklet, you will find reports from quite a number of these, which is supported by the weekly updated parish website and blog.

One of the highlights of the year, as ever was our parish day in July. What a wonderful day that was! We celebrated an open-air Mass with joyful and prayerful singing, renewed our covenant with the poor and presented the Lenten project collection cheque for £13, 669.71p to the Don Bosco School, in Hadath, Baalbeck in Lebanon. This was followed by a great barbecue and family picnic (lovely to be able to barbecue again together!)

Grateful thanks go to all our parishioners and to members of the PPC (Pastoral Parish Council), who volunteer their time to enrich the life of our parish. This includes 'unsung heroes' like our fabric and finance committee members, counters, maintenance team, gardeners, stewards, safeguarding members, health and safety member, choir, musicians, psalmists, readers, Eucharistic ministers, altar servers, cleaners - and all others who quietly contribute to the life of our parish community.

Finally, and importantly, I would like to sincerely thank our parish priest, Fr Jamie (who celebrated the 40th anniversary of his ordination on the 18th December last year) for his spiritual leadership, care and wisdom in everything that he does for all the members of our parish community.



ACCOUNTS SUMMARY *Report: Carole Sawyers*

	This year 1/9/22-31/8/23	Last Year 1/9/21-31/8/23
Offertory Income	£112,414	£104,251
Other ordinary income	£12,107	£11,043
Interest	-	£604
Insurance Claim	£15,484	£1,848
Gifts and Donations	£4,604	£3,479
Amounts recovered from furlough scheme	-	£749
Total Income	£144,609	£121,974
Clergy	£12,957	£12,675
Staff costs	£13,886	£13,547
Church expenses	£14,105	£11,144
Office & Presbytery costs, including insurance repairs in 2023	£50,462	£18,481
Parish Centre	£6,117	£2,802
General expenses	£10,457	£9,768
Major repairs	£7,910	£9,325
Diocesan Levy	£27,420	£30,607
Total Expenditure	£143,314	£108,349
Income less Expenditure	£1,295	£13,625
Net surplus for the year		

The parish also raised £24,977 (including gift aid of £1,797) for special collections – including the Lent Project for which £13,670 was raised. These monies are not included in these accounts as they are paid directly to the charities. These accounts also exclude the Christmas and Easter Offerings which are used by Fr Jamie.

Notes to Accounts Summary for year ended 31 August 2023

1. Offertory income includes £19,445 of reclaimed Gift Aid.
2. Since its introduction in mid-May the contactless machine has accounted for £1,183 of offertory income (plus additional sums for second collections and candles and books). The monthly cost is £15. Set up costs of £512.99 are included in office and presbytery costs.
3. Office and Presbytery costs include the redecoration works in the presbytery and the works paid for by insurance.
4. Gas costs have risen by around 270% and Electricity costs by 210% since the previous year. A grant of £600 from Abingdon Town Council was received for the *Warm Space Café* in the Parish Centre and this included a contribution towards heating costs.
5. Major repairs – Church Windows £3,422: Presbytery heating £4,488

RCIA *Report: Pauline Hanley*

Each RCIA journey begins with a ‘taster session’ in September and every year we pray that we will be blessed with new enquirers.



September 2022 saw two new candidates attend our session and embark on a journey that would culminate with the great joy of their confirmation at the feast of feasts - the Easter Vigil.

The RCIA programme, like most courses, is predominantly online, and enquirers are encouraged to attend weekly mass. It is always important for us as a team to build faith and relationships both online and in person.

Each of the weekly sessions begins and ends with a prayer and we close with a hymn, which is lovely. The presentation is always evolving and gives a good structure to each meeting, with a careful balance of instruction and reflection led by members of the RCIA team. Candidates are encouraged to contribute, or listen, as they prefer and it's always wonderful to see individuals grow in faith and confidence over the months. The weekly gospel reflections, for the coming Sunday mass, are timed to allow good discussion, which attendees find extremely helpful.

The yearly programme is an intense one – there is a lot to cover – however it is hugely enjoyable and gives our candidates good opportunity to ask any questions they may have and contribute their own thoughts for discussion. We are all different, with our own views, lives, situations, but one family in Jesus Christ, opening our circle to all.

Sharing our faith develops a strong bond and helps us all to grow and this continues after the yearly RCIA programme completes. One of the great joys is seeing candidates from previous years at mass and church events, actively contributing to our parish family, whether it be as readers, catechists themselves, or simply by just being there.

This is indeed Amazing Grace!

JTiF Report: Barbara Habayeb

The Journeying Together in Faith programme (JTiF) resumed in the parish centre on Monday evenings, to make it accessible to those without the ability to follow online.



The course provided a forum for those who have completed the RCIA course or who just want to develop their faith, to meet and make the journey together by exploring common issues and questions so that we grow as disciples of Christ. It ran each week during school term time. Over the last year the programme has developed to include learning from the saints, really understanding Eucharistic amazement in the Mass, unravelling the gifts God has given us, the joy of hope, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and a better understanding of Mary. The course is taking a break for the coming year and will resume after that.

PARISH PILGRIMAGE Report: Barbara Habayeb

In June we organised a parish pilgrimage to the beautiful Greek island of Patmos - site of St John the Apostle and Evangelist, who was exiled there by the Roman Emperor Domitian in the 1st century AD, and which was the setting of his vision of Jesus which led to the writing of the book of Revelation.

Amongst other things, the pilgrimage included a visit to the Cave of the Apocalypse, and the historic Monastery of St John.

Our next pilgrimage, planned for June 2024, will be in the footsteps of St Paul to the islands of Malta and Gozo.



FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PREPARATION *Report: Hilary Webb*

This year twenty-six children were prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. We met with our six volunteer catechists, over a series of Saturday mornings, celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent and First Holy Communion on two separate days in June.

Parent sessions, organised by three volunteers, were also offered in the parish centre during each children's session, during which parents had the opportunity for Confession and a small group instructional Mass.

Special thanks to the enthusiastic children, parents and volunteer catechists for enabling this programme.



CONFIRMATION PREPARATION *Report: Tammy Lavers*

Confirmation preparation classes run every alternate year, so there were none last year. This autumn we have just started the new programme and have 17 young people who will be preparing for the Sacrament with the help from three catechists. Please keep the group in your prayers.



BAPTISM PREPARATION

Report: Therese Webster

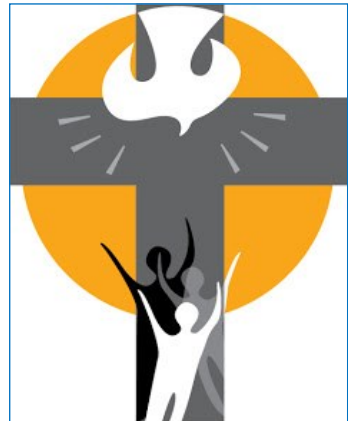
It has been an active year for Baptism Preparation, although we have now caught up after the backlog from Covid, and in the region of 22 families have been prepared for their children to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism Preparation is spread over two short sessions by *Zoom*, since doing this online suits the stage the families are at in their lives with young children. Families are asked to watch the *Sycamore* Film on The Sacraments before attending and we reflect on some of the themes contained in the film. We talk about what Baptism means and how it is the gateway to all the other sacraments. We think about the rich symbolism throughout the service and consider how by the virtue of the sacrament of Baptism, we are all drawn into unity with Jesus which has implications for how we should live and bring up our children in the faith.



CHARISMATIC PRAYER MEETING

Report: Mike Oliver

We continue to hold our Virtual Prayer Meetings and newcomers are always very welcome. We meet every second and fourth Wednesday evening at 8pm for an informal hour of praising Our Lord, reading and meditating on Holy Scripture, plus intercessory prayer; occasionally we gather in our home for an in-person meeting. Other activities include assisting with virtual Life in the Spirit (LiS) Meetings; holding virtual Post-LiS gatherings plus in-person Post-Alpha gatherings; praying for and with people on-line, by phone or in person.



MOTHERS' PRAYERS

Mothers' Prayers (in English) meets monthly in the church on a Saturday morning and is open to all who would like to pray for our children and grandchildren. Reminders of dates are published in the parish newsletter. The group has shared particular problems and outcomes, and we have seen many remarkable answers to prayers. Do come along and pray with us.



MOTHERS' PRAYERS (SPANISH) *Report: Sandra Alanis*

Mothers' prayers group in Spanish is a small group that gets together weekly on Friday mornings via Zoom. Doing the meetings online has allowed us to keep in touch with some friends that have moved from Abingdon and now live abroad.



The meetings have been a great source of support and companionship in our daily trials. We rejoice together and give thanks for every prayer answered. Once in a while, we try to meet in person to celebrate special feast days together.

MOTHERS' PRAYERS (FRENCH) *Report: Eliane Pony*

Mothers' prayers in French was set up last September. We are currently a group of four French mothers and we pray once a month in the Parish Centre. It is a moment to share testimonies and pray for our children. So many prayers have been answered. We praise Our Lord for this. Everyone is welcome to join us and we advertise our prayer meetings in the parish newsletter.



ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY (SVP) *Report: Barbara Habayeb*

During the past 12 months the parish SVP group has made a total of 290 visits and phone calls, 210 were to the elderly in their own homes or in residential care, and the rest were visits made to people with mental health issues, refugees, asylum seekers and the homeless. We have given practical assistance including financial aid, transport, clothing, household items, electrical appliances, food and children's school lunches, and provided bus vouchers for the homeless to travel to Oxford.



Some of our members have visited the homeless on the streets in Oxford. We have also continued to support, in a small way financially, the work of our 'twin' SVP conference in South Sudan who are experiencing great hardship due to the effects of conflict there.

We are not a fund raising group and so are very grateful to parishioners who have generously made donations to our parish SVP group. Our appeal in September this year raised £1,050.07 (£649.44 in GBP, £135.11 in foreign currency and £265.52 from online donations) and parishioners continue to make donations, which go towards those in need and makes a very big difference to their lives. A slot on the wall at the back of the church is available for small donations.

We also support the Mini Vinnies group at St Edmund's Primary School, with 13 pupils from year 6 last year and 14 pupils joining the programme this year. Last November, the children were supported by the parish in a collection for the homeless, which was presented at a school assembly to a trustee from Emmaus *Oxford*. They also helped at a couple of parish lunches, and visited a care home in the town to sing Christmas carols to the residents.

We currently have 10 members and one pending member. Anyone interested in joining us as either as a full or auxiliary member, can get in touch via the parish office. Meanwhile, you can support us in our work through your donations and your prayers.

LIVE SIMPLY *Report: Anne Dodd*

We continue, as a parish, to try and live up to our commitments as a *LiveSimply* Parish. There was a showing of the Pope Francis film - *The*



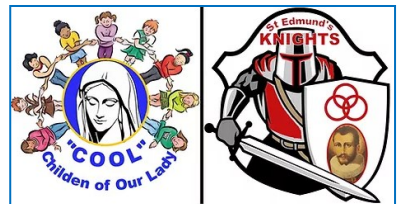
Letter - in the Parish Centre in the Spring. This featured the Pope's impassioned appeal to respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor which is the essence of being a *LiveSimply* parish. The Parish Covenant with the Poor was renewed at the annual outdoor Mass in the summer. The last commitment of that Covenant commits us, as individuals and as a parish, to living simply and sustainably, recognising that we are stewards of God's Creation.

A Fairtrade Treasure Hunt was organised in Lent and there was a Creation Prayer Walk in September as part of the Season of Creation which is from September 1st until October 4th (the feast day of St Francis of Assisi). Parishioners are active in supporting the local Food Bank and the Abingdon Community Fridge (which saves food going to landfill). The care of the Wildflower Meadow has been taken over by parishioner Rachel Everett.

Ideas are at present being gathered concerning ways to celebrate Christmas in a simpler way this year in harmony with the spirit of Living Simply. If you would like to be involved in this or in any other *LiveSimply* initiatives, do please contact the Parish Office. We would be glad of your ideas/suggestions.

YOUTH GROUPS *Report: Barbara Habayeb*

The number of children attending our fortnightly youth group activities have dwindled since the pandemic, but nevertheless, a number of activities took place centred around the Gospel readings. We look forward to more participation in the future.



The parish responded very generously to the fast day appeals in October 2022 and Lent 2023 raising a total of £2,545 in the second collections. Many parishioners also

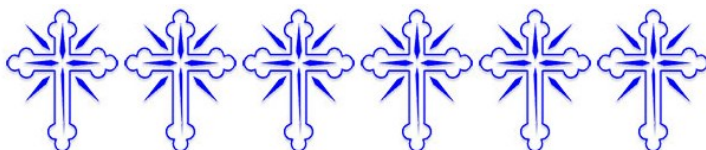


support the work of CAFOD through regular giving and by purchasing World Gifts – your support makes a tremendous difference to our vulnerable brothers and sisters in communities across the world.

During the summer CAFOD collected signatures on letters to the World Bank about their responsibility for ensuring fair access to vital seeds for farmers. This had a terrific response – more than 600 parishes across England and Wales signed letters and 7,500 CAFOD supporters have sent emails on this to the World Bank and UK Foreign Office. The letters – including the ones signed on our Parish Day here in Abingdon – were handed to the World Bank in London during October. Thank you for supporting this vital campaign. This is a long term struggle but progress so far has been encouraging and a CAFOD delegation went to the World Bank meeting in Morocco to speak directly about the impact their seed policy has on poor farmers.

A team of volunteers across the Diocese visit our Catholic Schools to talk about the work of CAFOD and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. If you are interested in learning more about this work please do ask. Most importantly please continue to pray for our work – there are some lovely prayer resources on the CAFOD website.

“We plant seeds of hope and nurture them as we seek a harvest of plenty for all”.



GRANDPARENTS' ASSOCIATION (CGA) *Report: Clare Calnan*

The CGA is a worldwide association of the faithful. In our parish we include great Aunts and uncles in our group. An integral part of the national and international CGA is establishing and working with Grandparents at diocesan and parish level. These act as support groups for Grandparents connecting us together to help and value each other in this great task. Grandparents have a unique vocation to be fostered and cherished in the spirit of St Joachim and St Anne, the grandparents of Jesus and parents of Mary. Grandparents have no agenda; they simply want the best for their children and grandchildren. Our local group was established in 2021. We have 28 members with a core group of up to 12 grandparents who meet monthly, and we come together in prayer, support and friendship.



Our plans include a mini pilgrimage every 4 months or so. We have visited the Newman College in Oxford, the relics of St Bernadette in Bicester and more recently an afternoon at St Ethelwold house here in Abingdon. We also had a talk by the famous writer and broadcaster Joanna Bogle. In the coming months we plan to do a 'walk and talk' in the footsteps of St Edmund of Abingdon and to visit Douai Abbey and the Carmelite Priory. We also aim to support suitable projects and initiatives beneficial for our community in Abingdon.

Last year, we were the catalyst to source funding and to build the outdoor crib, which was very special for our community but also for the wider community in our town too. We have more ideas both modest and more ambitious to further progress this coming year. Grandparents' vital contribution to the family, the Church and society was never as important as now. Pope Francis calls grandparents *'the treasures of family life'*. This is a the most important job we will ever have, a role from which we can never retire, so let's do our best. For more information, please contact Clare: Ab 524861 or Mary: Ab 534873.

HOMELESS SUPPORT *Report: Catherine MacFarlane*

The Emmaus charity is different from other homelessness services. The mission is “To work together to overcome homelessness and use our voice to achieve social change.” Our charity doesn’t just offer a bed for the night; we provide a home and meaningful work”.



Emmaus is a two-way agreement. To be part of the community formerly homeless individuals agree to be part of a group of people committed to helping each other and helping others who are on the margins of society. They work to rebuild their lives and their confidence and have training in order to rejoin the working world.

Our Parish supports the Emmaus Community by making many donations, such as warm clothes for the colder weather, furniture, clean bedding, towels etc, that can be distributed to rough sleepers, or can be sold in their charity store in Cowley to raise funds.

Last year, we arranged a visit to St Edmund’s School where a young, formerly homeless man came and gave a talk to the Mini Vinnies, answering their questions about how and why people could become homeless. The visit was a great success with many questions and discussion.

The Emmaus website gives a picture of what is achieved. Thank you for the support you so generously give. Visit their website at <https://emmaus.org.uk/oxford> to see how Emmaus works with formerly homeless people, giving them the dignity of work, a home and individual support to turn their lives around.

2 quotes from current companions:

“If it wasn’t for Emmaus Oxford I wouldn’t be alive today. I remember just walking downstairs and saying to staff ‘please help me’, which was a thing I’d never done before. They gave me the support I needed”.

“Emmaus gives people the chance to restore their dignity, a reason to get up in the morning. For me and most people I know in Emmaus, it is satisfying to know that you’ve done a day’s work and you’ve contributed to the community”.

PARISH LUNCH GROUP *Report: Mary Mulqueen & Jo Milham*

We have been continuing with the lunches with our faithful cooks and helpers who all contribute to make the event a highlight of the week, providing varied main courses and delicious desserts. Indeed, we would like to thank them all for their contributions over the year. However, it would be very helpful to welcome more cooks to join our rota.



Those who come enjoy good food and friendship and are very appreciative of the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

To enable more people to come, it is crucial that we have some more people willing to collect and drive them to and from the parish centre. Often it is transport that stops the house bound from attending, which is such a shame. They benefit so much from the company and companionship it offers.

PARISH WEBSITE & LIVE STREAMING *Report: Barbara Habayeb*

Our website: www.ourladyandstedmund.org.uk is actively and frequently visited by regular and new viewers. We also continue to receive a good number of enquiries and requests for prayers through our website. As has been since we started, our *News*, *Parish Blog* and *Mass Times* pages are visited most frequently, followed by the *Calendar*.



Our live-stream services, intended for those genuinely unable to attend Mass, is available on our website and at www.churchservices.tv/abingdon. In the last year, it has been followed from around the world in over 120 countries. 151,310 households have used this facility over the course of the year, with Sunday Mass viewings averaging between 300 and 500 each Sunday in the last year.

MISSIO Report: Clare Calnan

MISSIO APF - Mill Hill Missionaries - are vital to the growth of the Church and the spread of the gospel in predominately impoverished and remote areas overseas.



The funds raised build much needed infrastructures, from chapels and schools to orphanages, clinics and dispensaries. Requested by the local community, the support from MISSIO can transform lives and create a hub from which the young Church can flourish and grow.

Our parish raises £1500 to £2500 every year. We had a bumper year in 2022 with £3758.83 – but then we hadn't collected the red boxes, etc. for two years due to Covid.

There are three ways in which to support this vital work:

- World Mission Sunday: Here in Abingdon, we have a dedicated Sunday whereby the parish have an opportunity to support the mission of the Church via a special collection.
- Red Boxes: We have up to 40 households that we know of who have the well known 'red boxes' in their homes, so that family and friends can contribute when visiting.
- Annual Members: More recently, many parishioners have become annual members and contribute annually direct to MISSIO through online, direct debit or cash donations.

If you have a red box at home that needs collecting, or would like more information, then please call Clare: Ab 524861 or Wendy: Ab 532593



WARM SPACES/OPEN DOORS *Report: Berny Pratt*

Our Lady and St Edmund's Church was part of the *Abingdon Warm Spaces* initiative from January to March 2023, offering a warm place, hot meal, and conversation to members of the Parish and local community. Funding was received from the Town Council to cover the costs of hospitality, heating etc.



When *Warm Spaces* finished it was clear that what we offered during the *Warm Spaces* initiative was both valued and much needed and so we have continued as *Open Doors*, which runs most Mondays (except Bank Holidays) from 11.30 am until 2.30pm in the Parish Centre. We welcome anyone who is on their own or would just like some company, to join us for listening, conversation and lunch, or to just pop in for a tea/coffee. We usually have between 15 and 20 guests per session, most of whom are not Parishioners – some are members of other churches and some not churchgoers - so we are truly 'outward looking'.

We currently have a team of 18 volunteers, with a minimum of 5 at each session on a rota basis. Meals are cooked at home by a small group of our volunteers and brought to the Parish Centre. We do not make any charge, but we accept donations from those guests who wish to make one and so far, we have been able to cover our food costs through these donations as we no longer receive funding. Thank you very much to all the volunteers for the delicious meals prepared and served to us.

WORLD YOUTH DAY *Report: Barbara Habayeb*

We were pleased to be able to help to send three of our altar servers to the World Youth Day in Lisbon in the summer. They really appreciated the opportunity and said that the highlights included seeing Pope Francis, but especially going to Fatima and learning more about what happened there. All three acknowledged that the event strengthened their faith, particularly when they had time to reflect during the night vigil.



THE CHURCH IN ABINGDON (CiA) *Report: Chris Chatham*

The CiA gives an opportunity to meet with our fellow Christians in Abingdon to share ideas and beliefs, and it meets quarterly to discuss how the Christian message might best be made evident and promoted in Abingdon. The year began well with a service on the 30th October 2022 at Our Lady and St Edmund's for the Church twinning weekend, when the service around



climate change and sustainability was attended by the wider church community and their French guests and was enthusiastically received. On the 6th November the annual bereavement service took place at Christchurch but unfortunately was not as well attended as in previous years. However, the carol singing in the Market Place at Christmas and the Good Friday walk - both organised by the CiA - were popular and it was lovely to see so many of the members of Our Lady and St Edmund's taking part. There are plans to expand both of these events to encourage participation by members of the general public. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity took place with the opportunity for prayer at several churches in Abingdon, with the World Day of Prayer on the 3rd March 2023 at St Michael's.

The CiA helped by coordinating 'The Warm Spaces' initiative to provide support for those who were struggling last winter to afford to heat their homes. Most of the churches in Abingdon took up the challenge and small grants from the CiA were available.



I joined the school as the new Headteacher in September 2022. Over the last year, we have worked hard to



improve the learning environment for the children - the Early Years area has been refreshed, and we have established a 'nurture room' where children will always find someone to talk to if they are struggling emotionally. We have also improved our provision for children with special educational needs.

Worship continues to be a central part of school life at St Edmund's and there is some form of worship each day, including Class Prayer, Key Stage Worship, Sing and Praise and Whole School Assembly. We are very grateful to Fr Jamie, who regularly says Mass at school, particularly at the beginning and end of terms and for Holy Days of Obligation. This school year, to help our children develop an understanding that they are part of a wider parish community, Fr Jamie has also come to school to lead Key Stage Liturgies for the younger children in our school, and children in Year 3 and above also attend Mass at church once each term. On 16th November, St Edmund's Day, the whole school attended Mass at church and our Christingle Service, in December, took place at church too. We marked key points in the Liturgical Year with nativity performances at Christmas time, which parents were delighted to attend. The end of the Spring Term was marked by the whole-school Stations of the Cross.

The children are encouraged to think of others and were given plenty of opportunity to support those who are less fortunate than themselves - this included our Harvest Collection for Abingdon Food Bank and our very successful Lenten Fair, which raised £600 towards the Parish Lenten Project. With the help of volunteers from the parish, we run a Mini Vinnies group for Year 6 children, and as part of this the children were able to meet someone who had experienced homelessness first hand. They were highly motivated to collect clothing and other items to help the homeless. Additionally, children were invited to take part in a 'Faith in Action' club after school once a week in the Spring Term.

OUR LADY'S ABINGDON SCHOOL *Report: Daniel Gibbons*

Our Lady's Abingdon School continues to support, and to increase its involvement with, the parish of Our Lady and St. Edmund. The School is continuing to promote Catholic values, centred around its core purpose of *"To each according to their needs"*, and develop a strong familial community with Christ at the heart. The School is aiming to be in tune with the Diocese's vision to *"Bring people closer to Jesus Christ through his Church"*. The parish Church continues to be used for 'special' masses, and we are very grateful that we are able to celebrate feast days and holy days of obligation as a community in the church, where we are able to use the organ and our choir. The School is very grateful to Fr Jamie for being available to say Mass both within the Parish Church and our School Chapel.



In terms of fundraising, the School continues to work with the local community and support both Parish and Diocesan projects. For example, we fundraise before Christmas for Bamenda, and we also fundraised with the parish for Lebanon earlier in the year. We also invited a parishioner to talk to the whole school in assembly which was both evocative and inspiring.

MEMORIES



CATENIANS *Report: Chris Bevan*

The past year has seen the Oxford Circle of the *Catenian* Association implement our awareness building campaign which has involved the hosting of after Mass coffee in six of the eighteen parishes that we cover. We attended Mass and coffee in July at Our Lady and St Edmund's and met a number of parishioners, one of which is looking to become a *Catenian*.



Our wives started a monthly coffee morning for themselves and friends. This is proving to be very popular. It is a simple, relaxed social gathering, where catching up with each other over coffee is the order of the day. We also held of a very successful Mexican lunch in St Peter's Parish, Eynsham and a visit to the Oxford Bus Museum in Long Hanborough. Among other social gatherings we held a tour of the Ashmolean Museum, the focus was "The Bible in the Ashmolean." Who would have thought we had so many authentic and original biblical exhibits, right on our doorstep?

In January, we attended the annual Projects Fair at the University Catholic Chaplaincy, where we promoted the *Catenian* Bursary Fund. This provides financial support to young Catholics who engage in projects helping others usually but not exclusively, abroad. This resulted in two students receiving help in travelling to Kyrgyzstan to volunteer with the Jesuit Missions Project running a Children's Leisure and Rehabilitation Centre. Following a request from one of our parishioners here in Abingdon, we were able to supplement financial support from the parish, for three of our altar servers to enable them to attend World Youth Day in July.

October this year sees the Oxford Circle celebrate our 80th Anniversary. I'm sure that one of our founding members, J R R Tolkien would be pleased to see us still going strong!

For more information leaflets can be found at the back of the church or email enquiries@oxfordshire-catenians.uk

BABY AND TODDLER GROUP

Report: Karen Clarke

Over the past year, we have once again been making every effort to encourage families back to our friendly group. We have a *Facebook* page where we can keep in touch with local families and we are advertised in the *Toddle About* magazine. We run the



group every Friday during term time and have on average 8-10 families attend each week. As well as a lovely selection of toys to play with and explore, we have craft activities for the toddlers, especially in the lead up to special occasions. The babies and toddlers particularly enjoy singing along and joining in with the actions to popular nursery rhymes. This takes place during the last 10-15 minutes of each session.

We gave each child a chocolate Father Christmas to enjoy at the end of the term before the Christmas holidays. Earlier this year, the children were given an Easter egg during our last session before the Easter holidays. Through voluntary donations from families, we were able to make a substantial donation to St Edmund's Catholic Primary School. The money was used to purchase much needed equipment for the school.

We have received positive feedback from families who appreciate the effort all the volunteers go to, to open up and run the group. Parents enjoy spending time with their young children in a safe environment. We provide the opportunity for parents to talk to one another, make friends and share their experiences. The children are often happy to play either by themselves, with their parent/carer or with other children. We provide refreshments for adults, toddlers and babies to enjoy if they wish.

We are always in need of more volunteers and would be very grateful for any extra help. You can contact us via the parish office.



ABINGDON STREET PASTORS

Report: Pat Mulqueen

Almost every Saturday night since 2011, some members of our parish go out as Street Pastors in Abingdon providing support for those on a night



out (part of a nationwide movement that Les Isaacs started in Brixton in 2003). The volunteers come from nine local churches (members of the Church in Abingdon), are given training and have the support of Prayer Pastors whilst out on the streets. We work in close collaboration with local police and town council.

Street Pastors work in twos or threes depending on the number available on a shift. We go out at 10pm and stay out until everyone is safely on their way home (maybe 3am in the morning). We are there to be a resource for those out for an evening, to offer help, comfort, a listening ear, to be a friendly face to the lonely or just to be a reassuring presence on the streets. We try to care for all, to enable them to get home safely or to a place of safety if they have no home. Street Pastors work with Prayer Pastors whose role is very much that of providing support for the Street Pastors. They pray for the Street Pastors on shift, but also generally for the town, especially for the nighttime economy workers.

During the Covid pandemic, we were severely restricted by all manner of issues, lockdowns, but now are nearly back to normal shifts in Abingdon. We would love to have more Prayer and Street Pastors so if you feel it is something you could do, please contact one of the team. Why not come and give it a try? It's amazingly addictive. And you get a uniform! Contact Debra McKnight at abingdon@streetpastors.org.uk



CHURCH TWINNING *Report: Anne Dodd*

Our parish is represented by Pat Warren and Anne Dodd on the committee which has representatives from all the churches in Abingdon. The aim of Church Twinning is to foster friendship with Abingdon church congregations with those in our twin towns of Argentan (France) Schongau (Germany) Sint Niklaas (Belgium) Lucca (Italy) and Colmar (France). There have been three successful initiatives in the last 12 months - an Eco Weekend with the theme of Christian Stewardship of the Environment last October, which involved all the churches in Abingdon and visitors from two of the twin towns. There was also a visit to Sint Niklaas from 30th March to 3rd April this year with the Passion Play in that town at the heart of the weekend. And finally, a weekend visit to Argentan in October to celebrate 20 years of Church Twinning, which two of our parishioners took part in.



PARISH FLOWER GROUP *Report: Jo Milham*

It has been a busy year for the team and the time seems to have passed very quickly. We continue to be fully staffed with four groups, each with four team members. We welcomed two new members this year and always enjoy sharing new ideas and skills. We have tried to be aware of green issues and the increasing cost of flowers, considering such things as air miles and locally grown flowers and foliage. Where possible we encourage people to use flowers and foliage from the gardens and even the hedgerows. Some parishioners are very generous in supplying us with seasonal flowers over the course of the year. We ensure the Sunday Masses have fresh vases of flowers and are very happy to support parish groups should they wish to decorate windows for special events. We do not do wedding flowers but support brides and grooms if they need any advice regarding flowers, and access to the church. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our team for their dedication and patience over the year. We look forward to a new liturgical year and all the challenges and joys that it will bring.



YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

Mission Plan for the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth 2023-2033

1

To be a Christ-centred Church, putting Christ at the centre of our hearts and our lives.

1. Uplifting and devotional liturgy through music and prayer.
2. Ongoing formation in faith for all; both clergy and lay.
3. Locally-led evangelisation.

2

To be missionary communities; going out on Christ's service and mission.

1. Leadership focused on mission and service.
2. Our young Church nurtured and inspired.
3. Church beyond walls.

BRINGING
PEOPLE
CLOSER TO
JESUS CHRIST
THROUGH HIS
CHURCH

3

To be prudent stewards of Christ's Church; making wise choices to leave a sustainable legacy for future generations.

1. Reshaped structures.
2. Prudent stewardship of our resources.
3. Investing for the future.

Parish of Our Lady and St Edmund of Abingdon

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