

# **HAMPSHIRE DOWNS PARISH**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**27<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2011**

The aim of this annual report is to summarise the achievements of the parish of Hampshire Downs, pick out some of the highlights and report on the Parish Finances.

Canon Paul J Townsend  
Parish Priest

Marcus Whitfield  
Chair F & PC

Angela Muxworthy  
Chair PPC

# **Parish Priest's Report**

## **Living our Faith**

I would like to thank the Pastoral Centre Team, the many people who have contributed to the appeal and everyone for their encouragement and support. As well as the work which has and is being done in the parish, I know from my diocesan work that the generosity of so many across the diocese is now making possible many learning opportunities for clergy and laity alike as well as a fund which will support the education of future priests and the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life.

## **Fr. Tom Meagher and the clergy**

Fr. Tom has left us for the next stage of his retirement at Aston Hall, near Stoke on Trent. He went just before Christmas and I am already missing his frequent visits and readiness to help out in any number of ways.

I am grateful to all the priests and deacons of the parish for all their hard work and support. In addition to Fathers Vincent Convery, John Catlin, Alan Griffiths, Brian Croughan, Andrew Moore and the recently arrived Canons Brian Murphy-O'Connor and Gerard Hetherington, our deacons Gerard Dailly and Nick Reynolds form a group of clergy that we are most fortunate to have. It was a great joy to celebrate the ordination of Philip Harris to the presbyterate.

## **A variety of ministries**

Too numerous to mention is the vast number of ministries that grace our parish. I would like to congratulate and thank everyone for the energy and faith that has marked the life of these groups during the past twelve months. Whether it is the sick and housebound, those in prison or hospital, the young people, those preparing for marriage, sacraments of reception into the Church, the liturgy, our school, the homeless, the work of welcome and

hospitality or our links with other Christians and other faiths, all these things and more have seen commitment and growth of which we can be proud and for which we must be grateful.

Pope Benedict's visit was different from the experience many were imagining. His words, demeanour and respect for our countries stirred up a great interest in religion and in the human issues he was addressing in his speeches and homilies. This, in turn, brings into sharp focus parish communities like our own and our readiness to show welcome and hospitality to those who feel that they are on the edge of organised religion.

### **Welcome and Hospitality**

There are numerous aspects to this area of ministry which are flourishing in the parish at the present time. Because of its importance I have asked the Parish Pastoral Council to review and evaluate welcome and hospitality so that we might discern where best to focus our energies. I want particularly for us to take account of those many existing Catholics who do not feel part of the present Eucharistic community. I would also like to see small geographical groups based on scriptural prayer and sharing which would provide a structure for identifying and welcoming new people into the parish. I believe it to be very important to develop a way of making people feel that they belong to the local Catholic community and are valued as the vital members which they are.

St. Paul tells us "to make hospitality our special care" which I would like us to do as part of our plan for the next year at least. We must never lose sight of the importance of always increasing our ability to make people feel welcome in the liturgy, in the structures of our parish, in the large number of groups and ministries and in our own homes.

### **Catechesis**

I would like another of our priorities to be catechesis for our young people and adults. Again, while great work is being done by many, there is still room for development especially for young people not at Catholic Schools and in the area of the initiation of young people into the Church. The ministry and training of sponsors is also something that needs to be reviewed and developed.

## **Compliance issues**

Two compliance issues are uppermost in my mind at the present time because I know that I am responsible to ensure that all the guidelines are implemented. One is Safeguarding and the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults. I am grateful to Wini Meikle for all her work and guidance and ask everyone to cooperate with Wini in the often difficult work that she does. The other area that concerns me is Charity Law and my responsibility to see that all our assets are seen to be used according to Charity Law rules and guidelines. I have been reminded more than once about my responsibility in this area and am grateful to the Finance and Property Committee for their guidance and wisdom in this area.

## **The Word of the Lord**

While I have mentioned a number of areas in pastoral life which I see as priorities, a renewal in our openness to the Word of God has to be the most important. Pope Benedict's exhortation 'Verbum Domini' is a beautiful document which deserves to be widely read and its recommendations implemented in a parish such as our own. I will close with a quotation from Pope Benedict in Verbum Domini page 167: "Our own time, then, must be increasingly marked by a new hearing of God's word and a new evangelization. Recovering the centrality of the divine word in the Christian life leads us to appreciate anew the deepest meaning of the forceful appeal of Pope John Paul II: to pursue the 'mission ad gentes' and vigorously to embark upon the new evangelization, especially in those nations where the Gospel has been forgotten or meets with indifference as a result of widespread secularism. May the Holy Spirit awaken a hunger and thirst for the word of God, and raise up zealous heralds and witnesses of the Gospel."

## **Vocations to the Priesthood and the Religious Life.**

Our parish has produced priestly, diaconal and religious vocations before and I want it to do so again. Fr. Mark Hogan is now responsible for the promotion of vocations and I am delighted to see a good many coming forward to explore the possibility. My hope is that soon Fr. Mark will be encouraging and supporting a person from this Parish

## PARISH REPORT

Over the past year the Parish of Hampshire Downs PPC has been developing ministries and pastoral activities within the parish.

The PPC Ministry Working group was formed from the team brought together from the different worshipping communities to help with the transition from Pastoral Area to Parish. The PPC look forward to a slight change of members this year as we strive to become more pastorally-focused with a membership that better represents the various ministry activities as well as the worshipping communities of the parish.

### Parish Highlights

Hampshire Downs Parish had a very busy year with many activities in fund raising, socials and liturgical events. A few activities to highlight are:

- The pilgrimage to Greece following in the steps of St Paul.
- The Parish Advent Service that was held at St Peters' where the very reflective service was attended by a wide cross-section of people from across the parish.
- The Adult formation, Study groups and reflections that were shared during Lent and Advent.
- The well-received and well-attended series of Justice and Peace talks with the theme of Catholic Social Teaching. We enjoyed some excellent speakers and in-depth discussion.
- The teenage drama group who, with an unforgettable mix of theatrical talents, came together in the wonderful production of "The Little Shop of Horrors" last year. This year they bettered that performance with their fantastic production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream".
- A welcome expansion of youth programmes this year with 45 – 50 regularly attending the youth group. We now have two well-supported spiritual reflection groups for different age groups. They joined Eastleigh and Southampton for the Youth Sunday celebration where some 150 young people participated.
- Active Ecumenical events with Churches together in Alresford, Stockbridge and Winchester working together in Christian unity throughout the year.

- The contributions of all the different groups that work in the liturgy ministries.

And this year:

- A number of young people are preparing to go to the World Youth Day in Madrid, with others going to retreats and some on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.
- Large catechesis programmes including 65 – 70 First Holy Communion candidates and upwards of 30 enrolled for Confirmation. Journey in Faith (RCIA) continues to thrive.

Surely the highlight of our year was Pope Benedict's Visit to the United Kingdom.

Parishioners from Hampshire Downs attended all the major events of the Pope's visit including the address in Westminster Hall, Mass in Westminster Cathedral and the beatification Mass for Cardinal John Henry Newman in Birmingham. Eleven of our young parishioners were among the crowd outside the Cathedral to see the Pope. The chorus of cheers from the mass of young people waiting outside could be heard throughout the Cathedral, as the Pope gave his blessing. For those who attended these events, followed the visit on TV, or reports in the press, it was an occasion never to be forgotten.

The Pope's visit was described as a historic moment in the life of the Catholic community in the United Kingdom and a time of blessing and grace for us all.

After the visit Archbishop Vincent Nichols said:

"I think one of the lasting impacts of the Visit was of the importance and the place of prayer and prayerful silence in peoples' lives. The vigil of prayer in Hyde Park with 80-90,000 people was an unforgettable experience. I think it touched a nerve that helped people to recognise that the spiritual dimension of our lives is very important – it's important to our stability, to our poise and to our well-being.

"I believe that there is a shift in the acceptability of public manifestation of faith and pointers to the importance of the spiritual within the life of all of us"<sup>1</sup>:

In many of our ministries we are seeing a real difference in people's contributions that we feel may well have been boosted by the Papal Visit.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from the eBishop's Conference website.

## **Charitable Giving**

Parishioners continue to be generous in their support of all the parish is trying to achieve. We've fine-tuned second collections to focus on key charitable work. The charities we support are selected by the different organisations; Catholic Woman's League (CWL), Covenant with the Poor (CwP), CAFOD and St Vincent De Paul (SVP). The Justice and Peace group has also been instrumental in challenging us to move beyond the purely financial, to actively supporting various causes / charities in our area.

## **Living Our Faith**

In addition to all the pastoral activities we are continuing to pay attention to fund-raising for building projects and maintaining our building required to support our large parish.

The diocesan fundraising campaign was successfully completed during the autumn. Bishop Crispian, at several of the Masses celebrated in thanksgiving, specifically thanked the parishes of Hampshire Downs and Waterlooville for their support in getting the campaign underway. The diocese is already putting the additional resources to use with an increase in the support for vocations and training for catechists. Our own parish youth ministry has benefitted from the diocesan funds which have helped meet the costs of some of the large youth events including November's Youth Sunday celebrated at St Patrick's Woolston.

Within the parish, our Living Our Faith campaign is only £30,000 away from its target of £1.4 million. This has been a massive achievement, and thanks are due to everyone who has supported the campaign with prayers, time and treasure.

## **Parish Property Projects**

The success of LOF has allowed us to move forward on various capital projects. The work on St Thomas More Stockbridge is nearly complete and we are just starting technical discussions about a replacement or modification for St Gregory's creaking heating system.

The largest project, of course, is the new pastoral centre. This past year has been taken up with obtaining the various planning and diocesan permissions, including Historic Churches Commission authority to proceed. We have now passed all the hurdles, although the discovery of a well-preserved medieval wall on the west side of the old parish centre, and

the consequent extra archaeology, caused some delays. The old parish centre was demolished in November. The archaeology investigations and other enabling works can now be completed. We expect to award the contract to build the new pastoral centre in February and start work towards the end of March. This should mean that the roof will be on before the bad weather next winter, with building work complete by Easter 2012.

### **Links with the School**

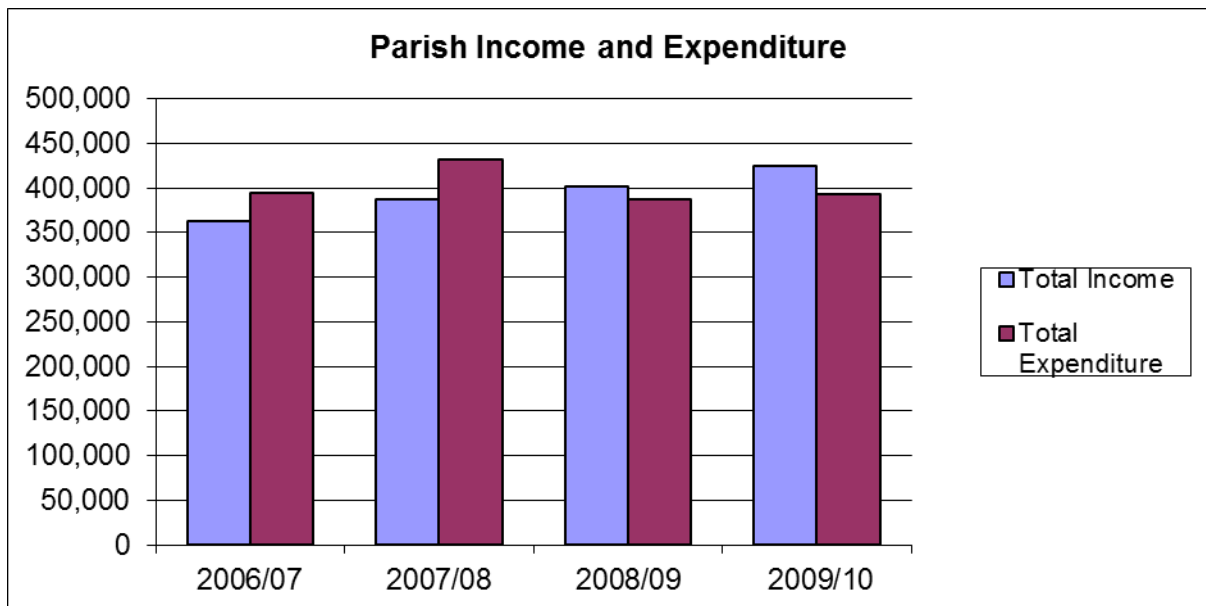
No parish report would be complete without a report from the School. Our Parish School received an outstanding report at the last Ofsted inspection and continues to provide both an excellent faith based and learning environment. The Welcome Liturgy and support for new parents and children is one example that helps emphasise the importance of nurturing children academically and spiritually. The Filipino feast was also outstanding - See Crosskeys Summer 2010 for more on this. The school is also very involved in the catechesis programmes and the youth groups and is hosting a number of parish activities

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The activities of the parish could not function without money, and many of our parishioners continue to support everything we do most generously, both in everyday activities and for the Living Our Faith campaign.

At the heart of our thinking this year has been preparation for capital projects arising from LOF, notably the parish centre. At the same time we continue to hold a maintenance reserve as many of our properties demand repairs on an almost continuous basis.

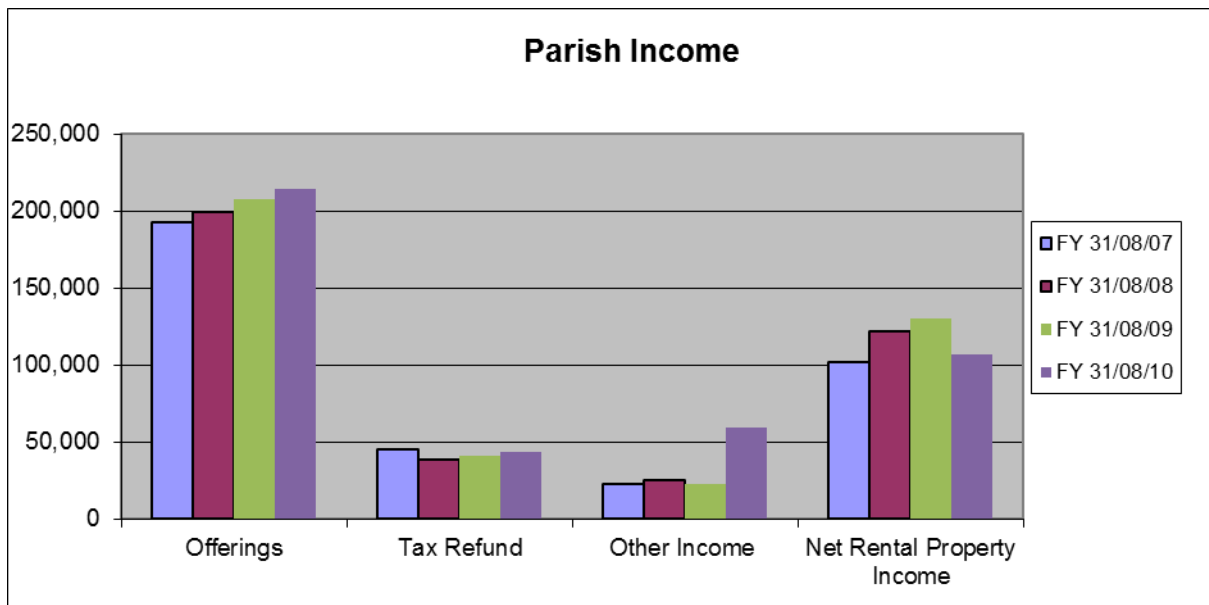
The charts below cover the finances, income and expenditure for the parish financial year September 2009 to August 2010, with a summary of income and expenditure over the past 4 years. A more detailed breakdown of all the figures used to create the charts is available as a separate sheet.



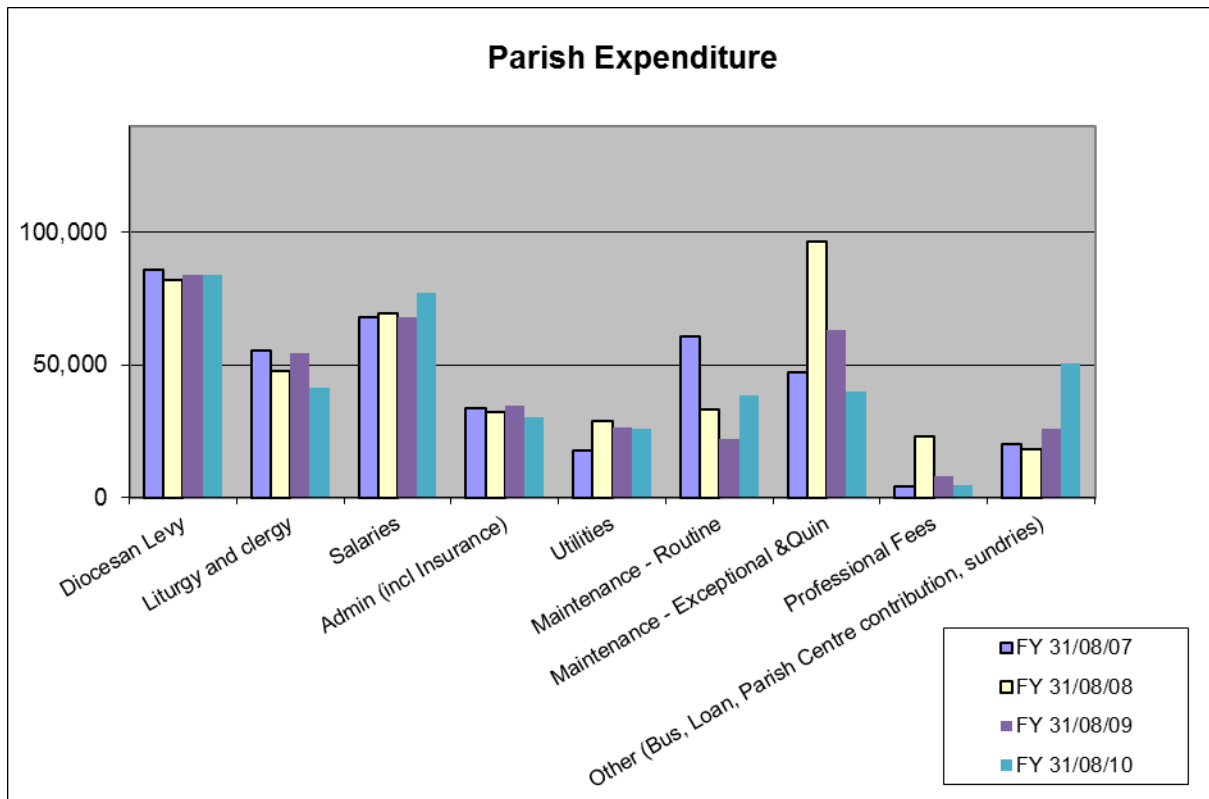
Our income and expenditure broadly track together; we aim to hold a sufficient capital reserve to meet unexpected costs, while at the same time delivering planned maintenance and everyday needs.

A gentle reminder:

- If you are a taxpayer and haven't filled out a Gift Aid declaration, please do so; we can then claim tax back to increase the value of your donation. The form is very simple.
- Please also consider reviewing the level of your giving; inflation has a cumulative effect on the value of Parish giving.



Rental income remains a critical plank of our income. The reduction this year reflects the parish occupying the offices at 29 Jewry Street while the parish centre is built. The spike in 'Other' income reflects the exit payment from Duncan Baird when quitting 29 Jewry Street.



Our expenditure. The jump in 'Other' expenditure this year reflects our contribution to the pastoral centre project.

## DEVELOPMENT IN THE PARISH FOR 2010

Last year Canon Paul gave us a list of challenges for continuing parish development. It was a long list! The activities listed below include a short report on progress and achievements:

- *Religious and spiritual formation of young people not in Catholic education*  
Two new reflection groups for years 7 – 8 and one for 6<sup>th</sup> formers have now been formed. The team still required people to volunteer to meet the needs of primary children who are not attending a catholic school.
- *The development of scriptural catechesis, particularly in local neighbourhood groups.*  
Lent and Advent groups have had varied responses so more work is required in this area. Lenten groups this year will focus on the Gospel of St Matthew.
- *The development of local groups for faith sharing and welcome*  
This is to be included in our ministry work as we focus on Welcome and Hospitality. Volunteers are required for all ministries within that cluster - please contact the Chair of the PPC.
- *Support for coordinators for ministry*  
Greater support for co-ordinators for ministry is being planned with the development of the clusters. Each cluster will be represented on the PPC.
- *The responsibility of every parishioner to support and raise awareness of the Journey in Faith process.*  
Journey In Faith does provide information for those enquiring about the faith and for those seeking to become members of the church.
- *The development of a ministry of lay leaders of liturgy*  
Individual training has been taking place throughout the year culminating in a Workshop held on 15 January 2011
- *The development of a communications ministry which would have the aim of helping the different communities to grow together and to raise awareness of the presence of the Lord's disciples in the world*  
Our communications have developed considerably with changes to the Newsletter and a development of a very well regarded website. However yet more work needs to be done to coordinate efforts throughout all our worshipping communities.
- *The development of a ministry for adult faith development*  
A new ministry group for Adult Formation now exists and is very active with programmes planned throughout the coming year.

- *The continuing development of the welcoming ministry so that all enquirers and new arrivals are supported and made to feel part of the community.*

We have been able to provide a receptionist at the Parish Office to give a warm welcome to all who call at 29 Jewry Street over most of the office hours. As mentioned above this facility is a priority for the coming year.

- *The development of an interfaith group and outreach*

A very active Justice and Peace group has coordinated the activities in this area. Our involvement with Churches together in Alresford and Winchester has increased this year; including taking on the Chair of the groups. Outreach development is being planned with our participation in the Street Pastors initiative and on-going commitments to the Night Shelter and Trinity Centre.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

### **Ministry Development**

Mission and Ministry are still at the forefront of the PPC work. We have begun to focus on our 2011 Parish Plan which evolves from the Diocesan planning framework for Parishes “Go Out and Bear Fruit”.

The PPC concluded that the best way to achieve our objectives within a Parish Plan was to work with all parish groups and develop ministries identified by a joint PPC and worshipping Community group workshop. We have called the groupings CLUSTERS.

The clusters are:

<p><b>Outreach and Mission, Liturgy, Welcome and Hospitality, Catechesis, Youth, Communications and Enablers</b></p>
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We are beginning to use these headings in the Newsletter (previously known as Peterpost but now changed to ‘Newsletter’ as a result of comments from the last annual meeting).

This work has highlighted the amazing number of people involved with the many activities of the church, and we would like to thank all who participate in the many ministries within Hampshire Downs. We hope to foster more effective links across the Parish. To that end seven display boards at the open meeting show the tasks carried out within each ministry.

Looking ahead, as the PPC formulates the parish plan for 2011, we intend to place more emphasis on the development of ministries particularly within the cluster of Welcome and Hospitality.

## **New Translation of the Roman Missal**

In this, the Year of the Bible, a new translation of the Roman Missal is due for adoption. The Missal hasn't been updated for 40 years.

Plans to ensure everyone has the opportunity to keep up with the changes to the Roman Missal are in the hands of the newly formed Hampshire Downs Liturgy Group. The bulk of the information for parishioners will come from literature being produced by the diocese. Additionally our own Canon Alan Griffiths will give some talks on the subject as we near the time the new translations become effective.

For 3 months from September 2011 until December 2011 there will be catechesis in parishes both on the new translation and on the Mass itself. This will precede the publication of the new Missal which at the earliest is expected by Advent 2011.

## **Our Challenges 2011**

Our overall challenge this year is to develop the cluster of Welcome and Hospitality and catechesis for our young people and adults. We have no doubt that Canon Paul will 'refine' these challenges – we will be looking hard for volunteers in the coming months to help us in these areas.

Thank you again for all you do and for your continued support.

27 Jan 2011