

St Elizabeth's Minsteracres

Annual Parish Report 2022/2023

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Parish Report for the year 2022/2023. The Parish Council would like to thank everyone in the Parish who supports what we do, whether by their direct assistance in the various activities or groups, or simply by supporting the liturgy.

Thanks also to those who offer their assistance to the wider Minsteracres operations. We are grateful to the Board of Trustees for their leadership, and appreciate our close links and harmonious relationships with the Community and permanent staff.

Massive thanks too to our clergy who are at the heart of all that we are and do. Fr Emmanuel and Rev David have proved steadfast in a changeable year, with the prayerful support of course of the legend that is Fr Mark. The resignation of Fr Antony some months ago was very sad as he had been so well received by the parish. We wish him all the very best in his fresh challenges.

This report is for presentation at the annual Parish Open Meeting on Thursday 19th October 2023.

Frank Balloch
Chair, Parish Council

2. Parish Council

Membership for the year 2022/223 has been:

Fr Antony Connelly - Ex Officio. Attended until March meeting.

Fr Emmanuel Kabinga – Ex Officio

Rev David Collins - Ex Officio

Susan Collins – Chair until February 2023; retired from Council in April

Frank Balloch – Chair from March 2023; retiring from Council after Annual Meeting

Alan Hodgson – Deputy Chair; Chair after Annual Meeting.

Frank McDonald

Lucilla Solly

Eileen Carew

Cath Manley – Retiring from Council after Annual Meeting

Celia Port – Secretary

At the present time we have a vacancy for Parish Priest and are grateful to Fr Emmanuel for his wise counsel.

Many thanks are due to the members of the PC who represent our interests and carry out their duties selflessly. Particular thanks go to Susan Collins who stood down during the year. We are delighted that she will be continuing with her many other roles within the parish.

Under the terms of the Parish Council (PC) Constitution the period of office for a PC member is normally three years with annual elections to fill vacancies. In practice however, the lack of candidates has meant that members have continued to hold office to ensure the functionality of the PC.

The Parish Council (PC) met for an "Awayday" on 21st January 2023 to conduct annual planning deliberations. The minutes of this and other PC meetings can be seen on the parish website (minsteracresparish.org) which also contains copies of the most recent weekly newsletters.

3. Finance

A financial statement has been prepared by Richard Bridges and is shown on Page 8. Once again we give grateful thanks to Richard for his invaluable assistance in this area.

The PC is looking at how some of our existing financial reserves may be employed to effect any repairs/upgrades that may be desirable. The starting point for these deliberations will be to commission a Quinquennial report (See section 12 below).

4. Liturgy Group

The Liturgy group has not met since Fr Antony left us just before Easter, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank Fr Emmanuel for stepping in and shepherding us over the course of the last 7 months or so.

Looking back however we did re-instate (post covid) our traditional Advent Posada and during Lent we offered (as usual) stations of the cross followed by faith development. A small prayer group also started to meet to reflect on the Gospel of the week - many thanks to Cath Manley for organising this. We also held a Novena for Blessed Dominic, ending on his feast day in August.

Our Holy Week and Easter Liturgies were very well received - once again our thanks go out to Fr Emmanuel for stepping in at such short notice and we must also thank Fr Ben for allowing us to use his inspiring stations of the cross on Good Friday morning.

Fr Emmanuel and I though are very keen to re-establish the liturgy group since the more people engaging in nurturing and developing the parish's liturgical life, the more vibrant and grace filled the parish will be. To this end we hope to reconvene soon. These meetings are of course open to all so if anyone would like to be involved please have a word with myself or Fr Emmanuel.

Some ideas already in the pipeline include:

- Day of reflection on the saving and transforming power of the cross - October 28th
- Exploring opportunities to formally unite ourselves more fully with the Passionist Congregation by establishing a Passionists Companion group as we prepare to celebrate 75 years of the Passionist presence at Minsteracres.
- Catechesis around the shape and meaning of the mass.
- First Holy Communion Preparation - Please let Fr Emmanuel or myself know if there is anyone you know who would like to be included.

If anyone though has any other ideas about how we further develop parish life in the areas of Liturgy and Faith Development please let us know.

Finally our thanks go out to everyone who was involved in the preparation and celebration of all of these activities and liturgies. Without the help and support of so many parishioners we simply wouldn't be able to do all the things we are able to.

Deacon David Collins

5. Justice and Peace Group

Introduction

Our Justice and Peace Group currently comprises Frank Balloch, Eileen Carew, Rosaleen Doonan, Ann Darlington, and myself. Over the last 12 months we have sought to:-

- Raise awareness of the plight of asylum seekers and support the Diocesan Refugee Project.
- Provide a focus for the parish commitment to support three Passionist Projects in India.
- Arrange coffee mornings and other events to raise awareness and funds of both local and international justice and peace issues and particularly for climate change and how we might respond.

Asylum Seekers

Once again thanks to the enormous generosity of our parishioners, our annual appeal for funds to support the Diocesan Refugee Project raised the magnificent sum of £1250 [including two individual donations of £500 and £100] following the appeal given by Ann and Rosaleen. We have continued to collect and deliver biscuits [thank you Eileen!] for the weekly food bags to the new base in the SVP support centre adjoining St Dominic's.

As an indication of the importance and value of your support for this project here are the latest statistics for the month of September 2023:-

- The centre had 531 clients [481 receiving some Government support and 50 destitute clients whose claim for asylum had been refused and received no Government support.
- During the month 1292 food bags were provided [Estimated value £9044], 87 clients received clothing, 29 new clients registered, and 42 destitute clients received a voucher for £40.
- Food, toiletries and clothing is provided to supplement their allowance, basic English lessons offered, and support provided by the Northeast Law Centre.
- Our new Bishop Stephen visited the project in September and was impressed by the support provided.

Passionist Projects in India

We have continued to raise funding for the Cow Programme, and to provide support to educate children from poor families, in the Randham-Korattur parish.

Some parishioners make regular payments and we use the money donated weekly for coffee after mass to raise funds. So far this year we will have sent a further £3000 to Fr Paul, the Vice Provincial in India. Again, this is a magnificent total from a small parish. We have recently requested an update on how our money has been used and we will circulate this report when it is received. We do know that support for the Brick Making project was suspended due to concerns regarding Government support. As a result our funds have gone to the Education and Cow projects.

Special Fund Raising Events

During November last year we raised and sent £225 to the Disaster Emergency Committee's appeal for the flood victims in Pakistan.

Lenten Frugal Lunch and Coffee Morning

In March we once again organised a Lenten frugal lunch in support of Cafod's Lenten Family Fast Day. This followed a coffee morning presentation by Mark Maughan from Cafod on their continuing support in aid of their 'LiveSimply' campaign and the impact of Climate Change. There was a really good discussion following Mark's presentation and some very positive feedback regarding the Live Simply initiative. Following these events we were able to send £235 to Cafod in aid of their Family Fast Day.

We have been looking at how the LiveSimply initiative might be revived within the parish and hope to develop this in the near future.

Talk by Fred de Lazaro

During May we took the opportunity once again to invite Camille's brother, Fred, to present some of the short films he produces for the American PBS network on 'Untold Stories' from around the world.

'Laudato Si' and Climate Change

In October last year we invited Minnie Fraser, a member of the Diocesan Environment Group, to a coffee morning to present the new film based on Pope Francis's encyclical 'Laudato Si' called 'The Letter' A Message for our Earth. The event was well attended and generated a lively discussion about what we can do both as individuals and as a parish.

Heavenfield Partnership

One of the areas where until the pandemic, parishes within the partnership were working successfully together was in regard to justice and peace issues. We continue to try to reactivate this partnership but for various reasons this year we have not been able to develop any joint initiatives. However, we continue to both advertise and invite members of other parishes in the Partnership to attend our awareness raising events.

Looking Forward

Later this month [Tuesday 31st October at 10 am] we are organizing a coffee morning and presentation by Geoff Bockett on recent changes and developments within and around the Retreat Centre. Weather permitting this may include a tour outside.

Jim Darlington

6. Riding Mill Churches Together

We have had a successful year with our local churches, St James and The Methodist Chapel in Riding Mill. Besides the Spiritual content of our services it has been a wonderful opportunity to mix and socialise with our fellow Christians.

- The First Sunday of Advent in 2022 was celebrated at the Methodist Chapel and in January 2023 the Christian Unity Service was held at Minsteracres.
- The Good Friday walk of Witness began at The Methodist Chapel with a large crowd from all churches walking to what is known as "Bobby's Corner" where a wooden cross (made by Pavan) was erected. The walk of witness was followed by Hot X Buns in the Village Hall.
- To celebrate the Coronation of King Charles we had a "Pimms and Hymns" Songs of Praise in St James where a huge crowd gathered on the eve of the Coronation.

Our Group meet approximately every 3 months.

Eileen Carew

7. Minsteracres Board of Trustees

The last year has again been one of change. Sadly, Fr Antony decided not to continue as Rector. After a period of uncertainty, when Fr Emmanuel offered willing and helpful support, he has been confirmed as the new Rector and we are enjoying working with him in that role which also involves leading the Retreat Team. Fr Emmanuel and David Collins are preparing the retreat for next year on the theme of "The Saving and Transforming Power of the Cross" which promises to be inspiring.

In September 2023, we hosted the first seminar to be led by the new St Patrick's Province encompassing the former St Patrick's Province and St Joseph's Province. This attracted an international audience of Passionist Priests and lay colleagues. There were some interesting and inspiring speakers. The delegates were enthusiastic about Minsteracres as a place to gather.

The year has been successful in seeing a 10% increase in revenue (calendar year to date) although, as experienced by everyone, we have seen costs rise, particularly with food, transport and utilities.

We have been fortunate to recruit two excellent chefs who are ably supported by our long standing and new assistant cooks. They are making good use of the seasonal produce from the walled garden and helping to keep food costs as close to budget as possible.

The housekeeping team has been short staffed for much of the year but again we have recently appointed a fourth member of that team, so we are at a full complement of staff across housekeeping and catering for the first time in three years.

The community, staff and volunteers provide excellent support and we receive some outstanding satisfaction rates from visitors. We are, however, conscious that the facilities require some improvement, particularly the drive and

disabled facilities. We recently arranged a specialist survey of current disabled provision which is to lead to a report and recommendations to progress.

The youth centre is also still on our "to do" list. A measured survey has been carried out to enable drawings and specifications to be prepared which can then be costed and used to inform bids for grant funding.

Meanwhile, Andy Pennington and his team of volunteers have been busy in the grounds. The results will be visible to you in the woodland but are more hidden in the walled garden. Do take the opportunity to visit if you can.

Liz Holmes and her team of outreach volunteers make an outstanding contribution to the ministry of Minsteracres. The groups who come, whether for a day or weekend visit, never fail to express the great benefit they derive from their visits.

During the year, Kath Smith, a long-standing Board member emigrated to Australia to be near her two daughters. We have recruited two new lay Board members; Susan Collins joined the Board as did Brian Kelly who is from out of the area but has great relevant experience and is to chair the Outreach sub-group. Fr. Frank Keevins and Fr Mark White are now the two Province members of the Board.

We are always keen to attract new volunteers and recently updated the Volunteer leaflet. Do take a look!

I am aware of how much the parish does to support the centre and once again take this opportunity to thank each one of you for your continuing help and support.

Claire Morgan
Chair, Board of Trustees

8. St Elizabeth's Music Liturgy

Music Liturgy Report 2022 to 2023

A small team of 4 or 5 singers have continued to try to create something special for important days of the year. This includes the Easter Triduum, Remembrance Day and Christmas week.

We also organised a child friendly carol afternoon with figgy pudding for all at Christmas. And will repeat this on December 10th 2023.

Liturgy music for the rites of Mass:

Took a hammering during lock down and subsequently. We have only recently re-introduced singing of the Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation. The plan is to gradually re-introduce the congregation to the repertoire they already know but feel rusty about. So, it was only two weeks ago that we had a go at a Gloria sung by all and it went very well indeed. Thanks to Minnie and Claire we are sustaining psalms and Alleluias most weeks. We would welcome anyone wanting to try their hand at this (men and boys welcome too!) to help maintain this important aspect of liturgy.

Other Music:

The choir loft has been busy with numerous weddings this year. It has been a real joy that we have been trusted to create classy music tailored to families wishes. We have had help from some friends around the Tyne Valley (Flute/ harps/ violinists) and the Minsteracres singers have worked with them to make these days memorable.

Special Thanks to Christine Fenwick who tirelessly continues to maintain the music library, a thankless task.

The Minsteracres singers will be doing a fundraising event in November. And we hope to do regular afternoon concerts thereafter.

I am not sure everyone in the congregation is aware that:

- Singing the psalm and both acclamations is seen as the minimum singing required for a proper celebration of the Mass.
- Hymns are chosen as best one can to reflect the readings and themes of the day.
- I never use an opening hymn where there are several high notes..(above C) Because the hymn will fail. Though the same congregation would manage the same hymn well by the end of Mass.
- I use the piano upstairs for quiet hymns, or to play a theme over and over if I feel it has become less familiar. I have to use the piano if I need to lower a melody.

Camille

9. Safeguarding

Many thanks to Liz Holmes who is our parish representative for safeguarding in addition to her role in the Retreat Centre with Outreach. This is a vital role in parish life and we are very grateful for Liz's contribution.

10. Social Committee

It was not easy after Covid to get to get people together again and the Indian Meal in October 2022 was much enjoyed, followed by Christmas fair and a very happy lunch.

2023 had a Burns Night to remember. Film nights peppered the Spring. as did people with Covid. But the McDonald grandchildren brought the Passover Supper alive.

Next a pea and pie Quiz evening thanks to Alan Hodgson.

Whilst we were lucky with a lovely sunny day for the summer barbecue in the Peace Garden where various young families - rugs spread on the ground - enjoyed delicious food thanks to chef Tony and the 2 Franks doing cooking and the bar.

After the summer break, Parish lunches have been well supported and the film club came to life again.

Sheila Longo

11. Flower Team

This year the Flower Team has recruited new members Mary Tapping and Denise Bottomley who have already joined our weekly rota and helped with wedding flowers. Gail Wade is also a willing helper when needed at these busy times, We have enjoyed arranging flowers for several weddings and have extended our range of arrangements to include a full arch on the outside of the porch.

This has been made possible with the help of the volunteers managed by Andrew Pennington. They have helped us design structures and provided the man power needed to erect and dismantle the flowers on the outside of the building.

We would like to thank Parishioners for their continued support and donations to Flower Fund.

Andrew has also suggested planting a cut flower garden in the walled garden for us to use. If any Parishioners are dividing herbaceous perennials we would be very grateful for any plants

Many thanks

Frances, Bryony, Cecilia and Jan.

12. Church Repairs and Maintenance

Alan Hodgson has recently agreed a regular forum where he will represent us in meetings with Andy Pennington, the Estate Manager, to monitor the impact and progress on repairs and maintenance in the church.

To ensure that we are up to date on the general physical shape of the church the PC has agreed to the commissioning of a new Quinquennial report (the last was done in 2018). This comprises a full study of the fabric of the church and identifies any remedial or upgrading work that the building will need and prioritises these in terms of importance and urgency.

13. Communications

Website/Newsletter.

Many thanks to Kevin Manley for maintaining the Parish website. One regular task of his is to upload the weekly newsletter. After many years I have sought to hand over production of the newsletter to a willing successor but have had no luck so far.

Diocesan Communications.

At the beginning of 2023 we were chosen to take part in a trial of a communications link by the Diocese whereby Fr Antony, Deacon David and myself were provided with laptops and I was dubbed "Parish Secretary" as the initial point of contact. Little has come of this however as there has been a hiatus in development plans.

Census.

We had hoped to carry out a census to refresh our contact data for parishioners and were promised a facility on the new Diocesan network. This has not come about however, and in the absence of any firm idea of when it may happen the PC has decided that we will go ahead with an exercise based on traditional methods.

Frank Balloch

MINSTERACRES PARISH SOCIAL COMMITTEE				INCOME and EXPENDITURE REPORT			

St Elizabeth's Minsteracres Annual Report 2022/2023

St ELIZABETHS, MINSTERACRES

ANNUAL COMPARISONS

	2020/2021		2021/2022		2022/2023	
	TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL	
<u>INCOME</u>						
Gift Aid	22259		23090		21120	
Other	2140		5179		7617	
	<u>24399</u>		<u>28269</u>		<u>28737</u>	
Special Collections	343		1154		1311	
Newspapers	0		77		138	
Candles	0		129		352	
Fund Raising / Donations	2286		726		1656	
Fund Raising - Social Committee	0		0		1020	
Other	820		3		19	
Interest	0		0		0	
	<u>27848</u>		<u>30358</u>		<u>33233</u>	
Listed Places of Worship Grant			1617			
Tax Refund - Gift Aid	4246		4354		4354	
Tax Refund - GASDS	1820		487		1178	
	<u>6066</u>		<u>6458</u>		<u>5532</u>	
TOTAL INCOME	<u>33914</u>		<u>36816</u>		<u>38765</u>	
<u>COSTS</u>						
	Paid to Retreat Centre		Paid to Retreat Centre		Paid to Retreat Centre	
Church Requisites	642		62			
Repairs & Renewals	14243	792	1280	132	100	
Housekeeping	6264	6264	3934	3934	3468	3468
Heat & Light	2304	2304	2435	2435	2461	2461
Clergy Allowance	8304	8304	10437	10437	10864	10864
Clergy Car Allowance	2076	2076	346	346		
Insurance	1380	1380	1461	1461	1477	1477
General Administration	1540	1380	1255	1255	1230	1230
Special Collections	218		1278		1565	
Newspapers						
Diocesan Levy	5134		2395		4281	
Heavenfield Partnership	792		0			
Other	2080		624		613	
	<u>44977</u>	<u>22500</u>	<u>25507</u>	<u>20000</u>	<u>26059</u>	<u>19500</u>
SURPLUS	-11063		11309		12706	
Opening Balances	72068		61005		72314	
Closing Balances	61005		72314		85020	
<u>Represented by :-</u>						
Current Account	6772		11623		18797	
Tracker Account	0		0		0	
Deposit with Diocese	54233		60691		66223	
	<u>61005</u>		<u>72314</u>		<u>85020</u>	