

A Message from the President of the Parish Council

The Annual Report of the Parish Council

St Charles Borromeo

The Parish Council was formed twelve months ago with a representative from each of the many groups of parishioners that support and enrich our worship at St Charles, each with their own particular abilities and three representatives nominated by you directly making fifteen in total including our President, Father Don. You can find a photo list of the members of the Parish Council on its Notice Board near the main door along with the minutes of its last meeting.

At the first meeting of the Parish Council I was elected the Chair and my role is to manage the business of the Council when it meets and to act on its behalf at other times such as meetings organised by the Diocese for consultation with Parish Chairs, or inter Parish meetings as required to aid good relations and share our abilities and good practice. I am also required to report the activities of the Parish Council annually to you for your approval on their collective behalf which I seek with this report.

Parish Councils are by their constitution only consultative and have no actual authority other than being a very powerful voice of the regular faithful in the ear of the Parish Priest who is ultimately responsible for the running and the leadership of our Parish. However, a Parish Council can be a very important source of advice, guidance and aid to a Parish Priest if it is fully embraced and I would like to put on the record that our Parish Priest, Father Don, has been at all times supportive of our efforts in the last year and has genuinely listened and acted on your council's advice.

The Parish Council has met four times since it was formed at the last Pentecost and I can report that the attendance of its members or their delegates if they are unavailable has been very good with the proceedings being lively and engaging. I would also like to record our collective thanks to Mrs Sylvia Shaw for acting as the Secretary to the Parish Council for the last year which she has done excellently and tirelessly.

I will also mention the Finance and Fabric Committee which every Parish is required by the Diocese to have and which works with the Parish Priest to maintain the Church in good order and to ensure the financial sustainability of its mission of providing a physical home for the Catholic faithful of Hadfield.

The Chair of this committee, Derek Handley, is an ex officio member of the Parish Council and reports its work at every meeting. I can report that the Finance and Fabric Committee has worked tirelessly on your behalf and I would like to put on record your thanks to its members and the Chair for their hard work this year.

Some notable successes that have come from the work of the Finance and Fabric Committee include the new heating for the church which I know has some unfortunate side effects of cold spots and draughts but no one can doubt that when it's on, the church is pleasantly warm. Another success has been the recent Sunday collection initiative which has raised the visibility of the financial state of our Parish and has led to a noticeable increase in regular giving through standing orders and income tax recovery. However, there is much more that can be done by raising awareness of the immediate need for financial support from the occasional Catholics who seek the sacraments and from those whose lives are fully filled with family life or who are disconnected with Catholic life and Sunday worship. Let us pray for their recognition of the value of a Catholic Church in Hadfield and see the need to support it now in their abstinence so that it is there when they have need of it in the future.

Following an initiative promoted by the Diocese to strengthen our non-clergy ministry, the Eucharistic Ministers have during the year been working towards this objective with the intention of playing a greater role in our worship and if necessary leading the Sunday Mass in the absence of a Priest as we face declining clergy numbers, but we have been so well served by Brother Phillip over the last 10 months that this has not been necessary. However Brother Phillip is leaving us soon and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him on your behalf for his valued service whilst he has rested with us. This is now an opportunity for the Eucharistic Ministers to play a fuller role in our worship and on your behalf I wish them every success.

At a meeting called by the Diocese during the year to report to the Parishes its financial position, it was revealed that the cost of forming new Priests was greatly exceeding the budget, which is wonderful news as a national shortage of Priests remains a real concern, however as a result of this, a contribution to the Diocese will be required from any Parish with a Deacon in formation and as Mr Owen LeBlanc is currently undergoing his formation to become a Deacon, we will be charged accordingly. I therefore hope you agree with your Council that we wholeheartedly support his formation and wish him every success.

The meeting with the Diocese also raised the need for retired priests to continue to receive an honorarium each year in addition to their care and housing which is provided by the Diocese. In the past this has been possible but is becoming increasingly difficult due to the pressures on the retired priests fund and we are therefore being asked as a Parish to fundraise to a target or provide a contribution from Parish funds if necessary. This is an ongoing item for the Parish Council and any ideas that you have will be greatly appreciated.

The Parish has been well served during the year by the many autonomous groups that routinely work to prepare the church and enrich our worship and social needs. It is their hard work that makes a visit to St Charles on Sunday such a joy for everyone who is there and I offer on your behalf your wholehearted thanks for their efforts. However falling attendance on Sunday is a concern and sadly with this unlikely to be reversed it will become a challenge to find able hands to support these activities as we go forward. A good example is church cleaning where a few willing and if I may say long standing parishioners regularly support this essential task but despite many requests for more youthful help, this has not been regularly forthcoming. Please help if you can but like the other autonomous groups regular is the operative word.

During the year, the need to refurbish the Organ has materialised with regular maintenance no longer an economic option if we are to continue using this wonderful instrument which apparently is the last of its kind in use. There has been some concern about the cost of this undertaking diverting much needed funds to sustain our Parish but I am assured by Father Don that this matter will be properly consulted on and agreed before we proceed.

There are many other important matters ongoing that are too numerous to mention that the Parish Council have in hand, which you can follow if you read the minutes as they are posted, please take the time to read them, however this raises an important need to communicate more effectively with all of the Catholics in Hadfield especially those that are disconnected from us at present. To this end the website is now more easily found by simply searching for a Catholic Church in Hadfield but we could do much more and a Facebook presence is urgently needed. If you are willing to moderate a Facebook for St Charles Borromeo please let me or Father Don know, you will be welcome.

Nick Collins, Chair of the Parish Council