

SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS AS TO WHY THE CHURCH AND PARISHIONERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH IN CHARLESWORTH ALSO REFERRED TO AS BROADBOTTOM SHOULD REMAIN IN THE GREATER GLOSSOPDALE REORGANISED PARISH.

1. Parish mergers are simple in theory but complicated in practice. A single parish has a direct relationship with the day to day life in the ministry of the church. Although currently the four catholic churches in our area tend to operate independently there is one priest Canon Don who serves and administers St Charles Hadfield and the Immaculate Conception Charlesworth and Fr Martin who serves and administers All Saints Glossop and St Marys Glossop. They are supported in various aspects by pastoral councils which all seem to have different constitutions.
2. A parish serves the needs of the people within its boundary. Seeking to blend a number of parishes into one larger unit cannot be done from a distance by merely looking at a map. It seems as if that is what has been done without any community awareness or involvement with the proposal to merge St Charles, All Saints and St Marys into one large parish unit and the Immaculate Conception to have totally new links with New Mills and Marple each one seven miles away.
3. Although history and tradition might be of less importance in our modern world, it is most significant to older generation .Winston Churchill and even quoted by HM The Queen said

'The further backwards you look the further forward you can see'
4. Catholics that have supported, funded, planned parish events and dedicated themselves to that church community see the great value of its historical origins and traditions as well as some of the new innovative initiatives introduced by current parishioners. Even new parishioners are keen to learn of the foundations of their church.
5. The Immaculate Conception always had links with St Charles Parish Hadfield whose PP had built the church in 1895.It was priests from St Charles who said mass there usually a curate until the 1950s.When St Charles had just one priest then for some years it was the curate from St Marys Glossop who serviced the Immaculate Conception until they too lost their curate and it reverted back to St Charles.
6. The building of the Manchester overspill estate at Gamesley in the early 1960's was inspirational and crucial in plans by St Marys Parish priest Canon Alfred Baldwin to build a primary school to cater for the young catholic families from various parts of Manchester that had been rehoused there. The church was available to them 2 miles up the road at the Immaculate Conception but the school was his priority. At first there were some tensions between existing residents of Charlesworth and Broadbottom and the newcomers from the estate, often linked to socio-economic differences, but this dissipated as the communities grew closer together in the development of a catholic parish in 1971 with a new priest. Priest originally staying in a house on the estate until a bungalow was built near the school. This priest and subsequent ones developed with the parishioners the catholic life at the Immaculate Conception and a Mass Centre at the thriving school of St Margaret's with the school and the church each having a focus.

7. In 1961 a catholic secondary school had been opened thanks also to the determination of Canon Baldwin .Blessed Philip Howard High School now St Philip Howard Catholic Voluntary Academy since 2015 was and is a multi-parochial school and the children attend from the parishes of All Saints and St Marys Glossop, St Charles Hadfield, St Margaret's Gamesley and the Immaculate Conception Charlesworth.
8. All the links of the Immaculate Conception Church and Parish are to the Glossopdale community and as the years have gone by they have become much closer in every way-pastorally, socially, educationally and in part financially. They can easily cross over for masses at times as convenient. Sadly the Gamesley community only seems to feature at Immaculate Conception for funerals these days with the demise of the single St Margaret's Primary School and the closing of St Margaret's as a mass centre. If ever outreach was needed it is on that estate where many Catholics in name are the salt of the earth.
9. There are no connections with Marple and New Mills parishes as they are situated a round trip of 14 miles away as compared to Hadfield and Glossop a round trip of 6 miles but it does not seem that way due to it being so well used and familiar. Those who regularly attend the Immaculate Conception would feel isolated if their links were not to the communities they are familiar with and enjoy working with. Listen to those who said so at the recent meeting.
10. Who can forget the beautiful liturgies so well prepared for us by a joint team during lockdown and before on line masses became the norm when our churches were closed? A Scripture reading, a thought for the day, a hymn or beautiful religious music and prayers showed what could be done by leaders and followers. It was often shared Nationwide and even worldwide with our friends and relatives a particular kind of outreach.
11. There are trains from Broadbottom to both Hadfield and Glossop. There are good bus links between Gamesley and Glossop and Hadfield. There are also easy walking routes. New Mills and Marple have very limited and arduous transport links and can be extremely difficult to negotiate in winter weather with a number of accidents recorded.
12. Very strong bonds have built up between Charlesworth/ Broadbottom and Hadfield St Charles and with All Saints and St Marys Glossop due to having one priest for each unit and at times a wider grouping has been experienced with links associated with special events, cross parish trips ,retreats, walking groups ,pilgrimages and a number of social events.
13. It looks as if the one priest for the area may have to operate but it should be managed including the Immaculate Conception within its boundary.
14. It would also require a Glossopdale wide Parish Community Council with the satellite church communities having their timetabled masses and running events at their venues plus organised outreach. Perhaps similar to how school governors are organised in the Diocesan academy trusts. Each church having elected representatives to the main Parish Council.
15. There are key words and their understanding and explanation are essential to consider when making any merger proposals

- **Review Intentions**
- **Preparation of proposals**
- **Publication of up to date proposals**
- **Consultation**
- **Cooperation**
- **Negotiation**
- **Agreement**
- **Implementation**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

16. Although it is some years since these proposals were first mooted we have had changes in personnel at the Diocese a new Bishop, our churches –some new parish priests, and among our parishioners many lost through Covid not just the disease but the effects of it on parish life. The Pandemic has impacted in so many ways and the current Church climate means we should review again what was proposed those years ago and carefully reflect if they are in keeping with our current needs and future plans.

17. It was very obvious that at a meeting held on Sunday May 15th that the parishioners from Immaculate Conception without doubt wanted to remain within the community they know and love.

Kath Holtom (May 2022)