

# **PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL (PPC) CORE GROUP FINAL REPORT**

## **BACKGROUND**

Over the last 14 months the PPC Core Group has been developing a way ahead for a more pastoral PPC. The Group has now completed its work and action is in hand to select and appoint the new PPC by the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2009.

The role of the Parish Pastoral Council is important to all parishioners. It is the prime body of support to the Parish Priest and assists him in his administration of Parish pastoral matters. The term "pastoral matters" is very broad. In short, it means, whatever pertains to the work of the Parish Priest, the pastor, including the well being of the community, the spiritual needs of the parish and concerns that will need attention in the future. The Pastoral Council identifies these issues and studies them thoroughly particularly in regard to:

- Outreach and communication
- Faith enrichment and personal spiritual growth
- Welfare of parishioners
- Youth work
- Social events

The Core Group has been the acting PPC with its regular PPC meetings continuing. These have all included consideration of what have been called the regeneration activities. A study day was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2008. This looked at the parish mission and vision, reviewed existing ministries and explored how the PPC can enable the Parish to fulfil its mission. Working groups were set up to look in more detail at the top priority areas of: Mission & Vision; Role & Selection of the PPC; Welfare; Prayer & Spirituality; and Social. Youth, Formation and Outreach were considered at further working groups in April although time only allowed Outreach to be considered in any detail.

Two Parish Gatherings were held in December and about 70 parishioners attended these. The gatherings were primarily social occasions but they also gave an opportunity to display the interim findings of the Core Group. A further aim was to get a measure of consensus on the Parish Mission and Vision, Role and Selection of the PPC and the handling of welfare. A final gathering is being held on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009 to hear a brief report on the Core Group's report.

Activities related to the Alton-Petersfield Pastoral Area (APPA) have impinged upon the timescale for the Core Group's work. It is recognised that in the longer term APPA may become the Parish. But this does not alter the need to ensure that our present Parish community grows in faith, cares for its parishioners and improves its social cohesion. Even in a larger parish, St Laurence will continue as a worshipping community in its own right and with its consequent needs and responsibilities both to Petersfield/Liss based parishioners and the wider ecumenical community (PACT for instance). Spiritual, financial and administrative requirements are likely to be delegated from the new, larger Parish.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

This report outlines the Core Group's findings and recommendations.

**PARISH MISSION STATEMENT**

The following was agreed following the September gatherings:

**Theme:** *Jesus says: 'This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you'*

**Mission:** *To Grow in Faith through the Love and Understanding of All.*

It was felt that the mission should be kept simple and not limiting. On this basis it was decided that a theme from scripture was appropriate as the basis with the mission being a broad aim to meet this.

**PARISH VISION**

Again we have tried to keep this simple and diagrammatical. Fig 1 shows concentric circles which at the top have the actions that we need to take as a Parish to strive towards the Diocesan and more importantly the Church's intent to be 'One Body, One Spirit in Christ'.

Fig 1: Vision



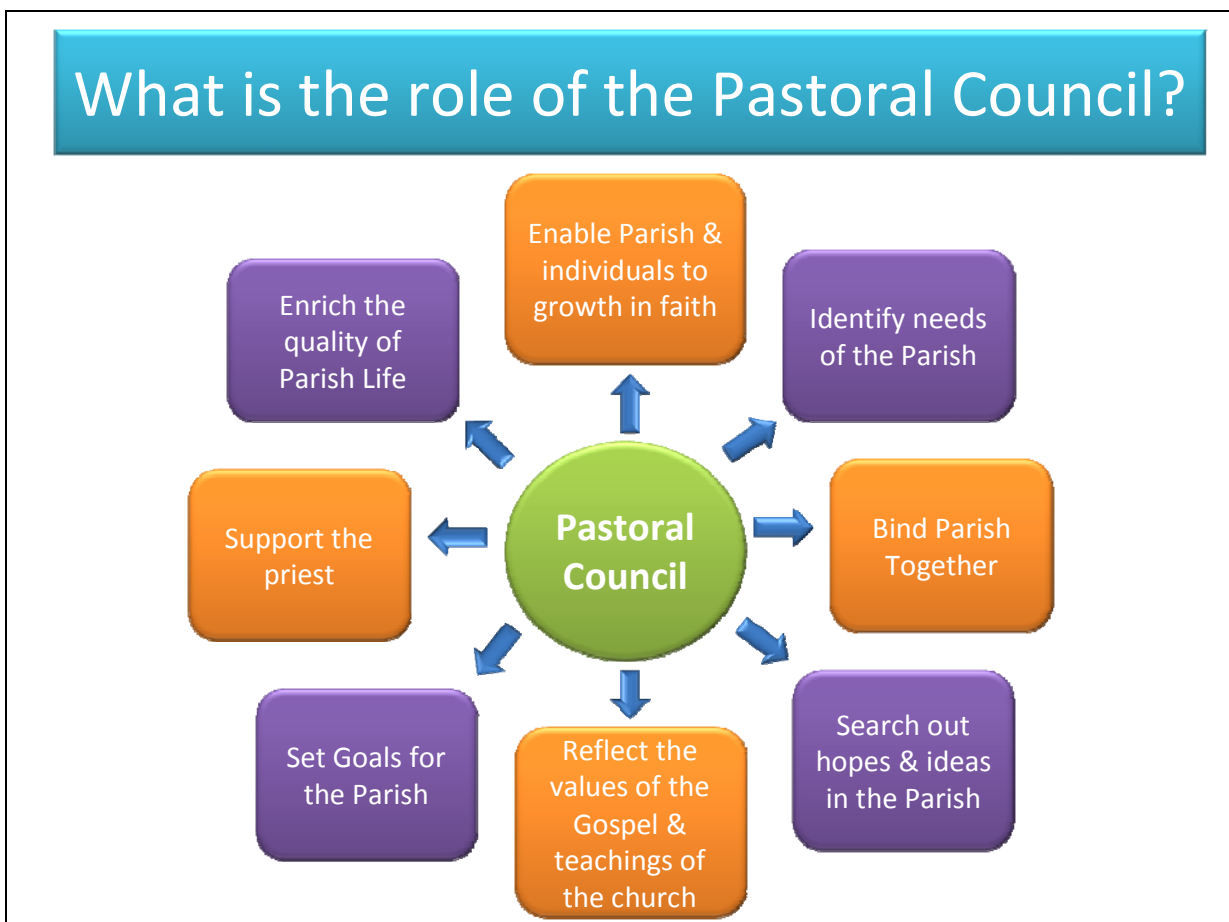
The actions rely on getting to know each other as Parishioners and therefore Brothers and Sister in Christ. Much of this will be through social activities. By knowing each other better we will identify and better meet need whether of parishioners or the wider community. Thereby we can care for those in need through formal and informal welfare activities. Alongside and as part of the top three elements we must grow in faith as individuals but essentially as a community of faith. Again the community brings us back to caring and knowing each other better.

The Group sees visiting as a fundamental activity we must improve: too long have we relied on the Parish Priest and the committed individuals to do this for us. Similarly communications in all forms are vital: the new website and 'The Dome' magazine are exciting initiatives here. The lower half of the diagram shows both targets and activities for the main action themes. Achieving our Vision is to show growth in all these areas.

**ROLE & SELECTION OF PPC**

**PPC Role**

Fig 2 Role



The intention is that the PPC should henceforth be more pastoral: that is, it should lead the Parish towards being more caring for the spiritual and physical needs of parishioners and members of the wider community. The PPC Role is shown in Fig 2. Although the PPC may need to set goals and priorities this should be in conjunction with the more administrative Parish bodies such as the Finance and Maintenance committees. A set of PPC Guidelines have been produced.

## **Selection of PPC**

Broadly, there are 3 main options for creating a PPC. The original one of appointment by the Parish Priest was superseded by nomination and election by the Parish. The Core Group consensus was that the democratic nature of elections has been weakened by the majority of parishioners not knowing the candidates. Because of this, and until we succeed in the vision aim of knowing each other better, the recommended option was to have selection by a Parish body following nomination of candidates by the wider Parish. This was agreed following the gatherings in September.

The process of selection and appointment process is now in hand and includes the following stages:

- In about June or July each year the Parish Priest tells the Parish that new members are to be appointed to the PPC and invites the Parish's involvement through prayer and nominations of suitable candidates.
- The Parish Priest works with a selection committee of appropriate people to discern who should be appointed, taking account of the Parishioners nominated and any others with suitable gifts for this ministry.
- The Selection Committee is appointed by the Parish Priest to organise and carry out the selection process. The Selection Committee is likely to be based on the PPC Executive Group and other leaders or representatives of Parish groups as appropriate.
- The committee is to select new PPC members to replace those standing down to maintain a total of nine members. Members serve for three years with normally three changing each year.

## **WELFARE**

Welfare of parishioners is handled currently in a somewhat ad hoc manner. This places the responsibility on the Parish Priest and those individual parishioners who are very dedicated in visiting and helping those they know to be in need. Welfare matters have to be handled sensitively and often in confidence. The present system works this way but there are major concerns that the Parish may be unaware of others in need and fuller support is often lacking.

There are a number of options for handling and perhaps improving our welfare support while at the same time not supplanting the good works of those presently providing support. The Core Group recommended re-instituting a Parish St Vincent de Paul (SVP) conference. This has the support of the Parish Priest and received agreement at the Autumn gatherings. An SVP conference offers a number of benefits over setting up a completely new and local organisation. Firstly, the Parish did have an SVP conference which operated successfully a number of years ago and some of the experience from this remains. Secondly, SVP operates under clear guidelines and rules, and this is important in today's legislative climate. Thirdly, SVP has a diocesan and nationwide structure which offers support and training in the setting up and running of new conferences. The third point means that there are also communication channels through central SVP for notification of welfare cases by other welfare agencies.

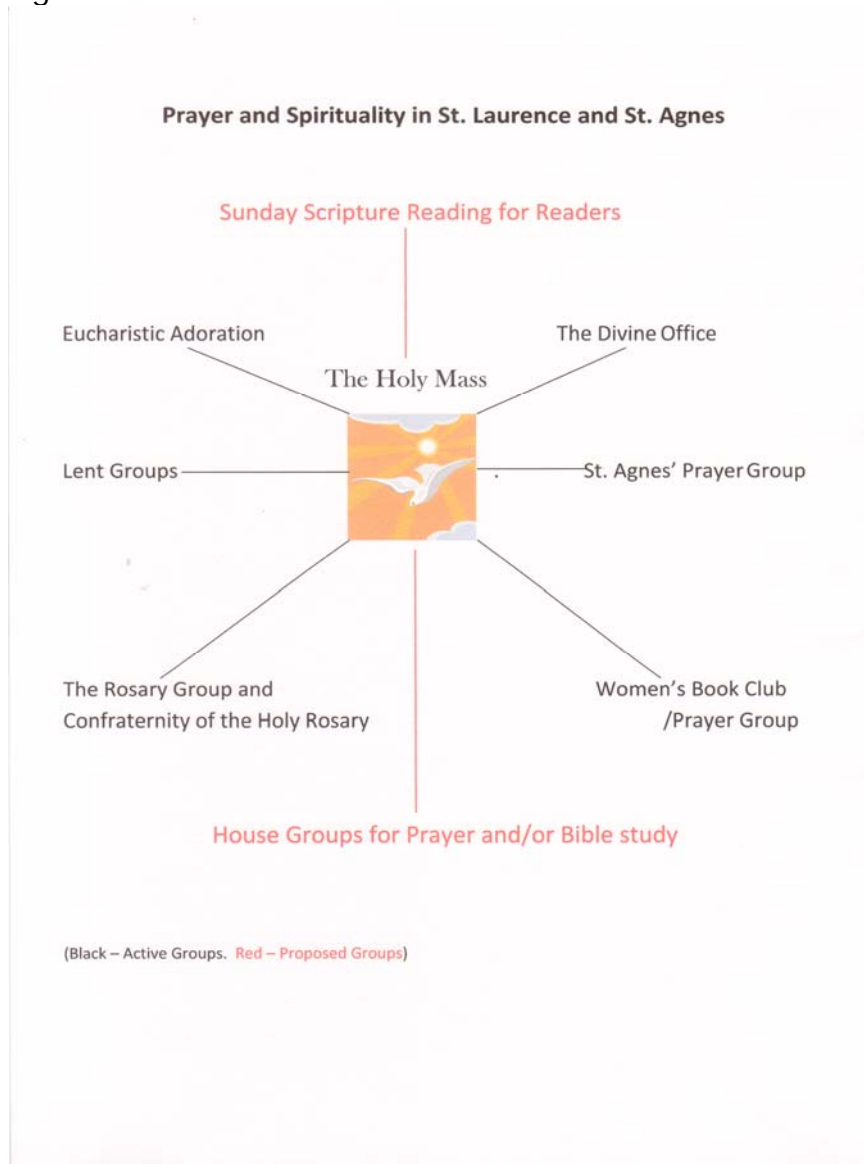
Full members of SVP commit to attending all conference meetings (probably once a month) and visiting those in need. It would require a minimum of eight full members but those unable to take on the full commitments but have talents to offer (including visiting and fund raising) can become associate members.

The PPC recommends that steps are now taken to start an SVP Conference again as follows:

- Arrangement of talk on SVP at all Masses (by SVP District representative)
- Meeting of interested parishioners to determine firm commitment from at least eight
- Formal setting up as guided by SVP District with selection of President, Secretary and Treasurer

**SPIRITUALITY**

Fig 3



The Spirituality Working Group considered the current ways in which prayer and spirituality are approached by groups of parishioners (Fig 3). The WG has also looking at how these activities may be enhanced or extended. For instance, there is an initiative to get Sunday readers together to enrich this particular ministry. Interest is also being shown in setting up further prayer and Bible study groups.

Resources for any house groups for bible study could be provided if requested. There is also a spirituality evening to be led by Fr Paul King on 21<sup>st</sup> July. It is hoped that this might lead to a pastoral Area Spirituality Group being instigated.

Eight parishioners completed the ECHOES training for handing on faith recently.

**SOCIAL**

The Core Group recognises that improvements in Parish life can only come about if parishioners can get to know each other better. A formal visiting programme can help

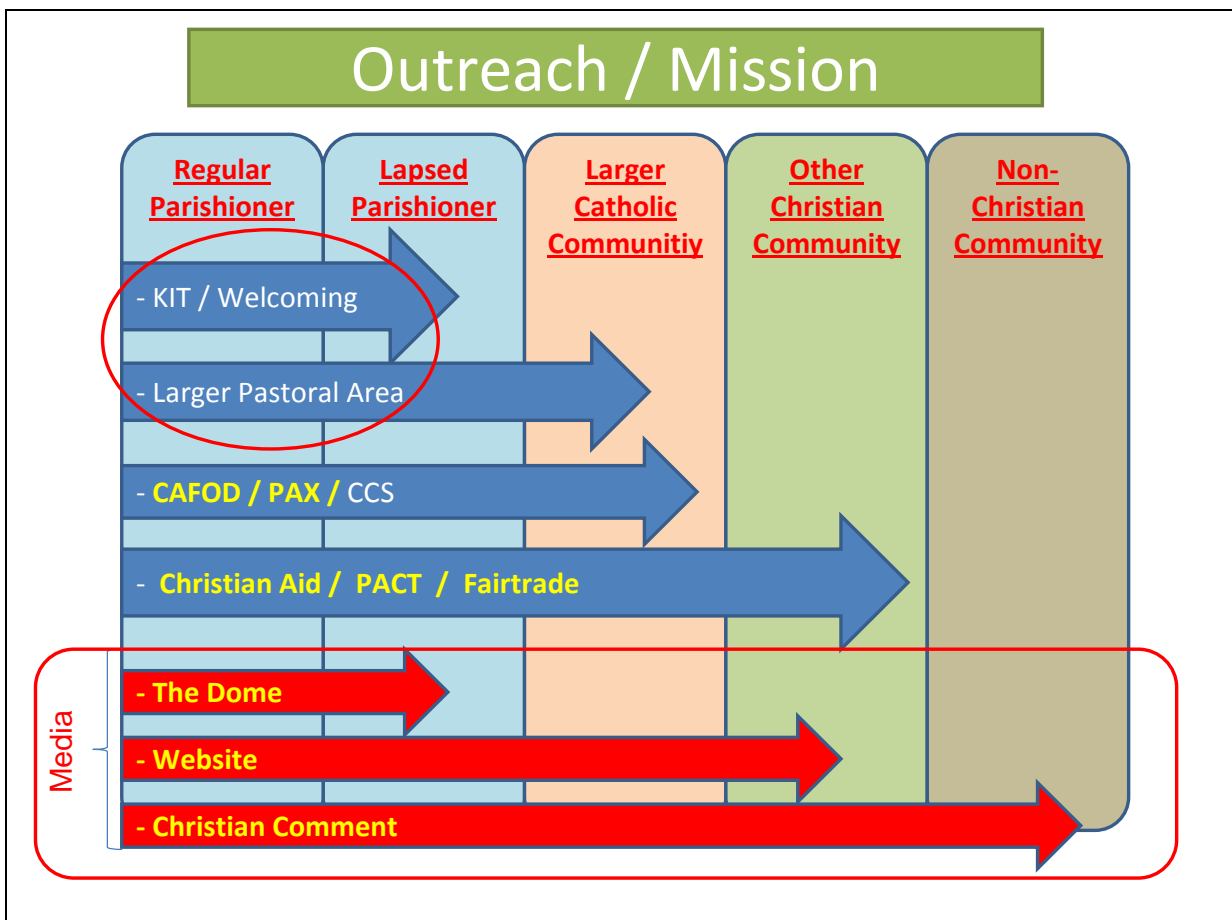
but more social activities are needed – and these will be only successful if a greater percentage of the Parish attend them.

Already many social events are held regularly in the parish including coffee after Mass, the Wednesday Club, Christmas Party, Harvest Festival, and Parish outings. A new Social Group has been operating for the last few months. This has organised the Parish gatherings and social activities such as the recent Quiz Night where £102.00 was raised to go towards future events.

Suggestions from parishioners for other events include organising pilgrimages of St Paul's routes and St James's route to Santiago de Compostela, walks with young folk and PACT, a Race night, Murder Mystery evening, Men's afternoon ramble and pub group, and Men's/Dads' Saturday morning breakfast group, Mother and Toddlers group. Some of these excellent ideas are in the planning stage.

## **OUTREACH**

Fig 4



The areas considered by the Outreach working group are shown in Fig 4. Key priorities are recommended as follows:

- Develop a 'Keeping in Touch' (KIT)/Welcoming initiative
- Develop initiatives to bring the larger pastoral area and the Parish together – sharing goals and ambitions

- Bring the Charity representatives together in a group to maximise message/interaction with the parish
- Ensure active participation in PACT
- Maintain visible and active communications

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Core Group is grateful for the assistance it has had in its work from many parishioners. Whilst it can report that the Parish Community of St Laurence is healthy in many respects it should be recognised that there is still much work to be done in improving spiritual and welfare care, particularly the latter.

A Parish Mission and Vision have been developed and agreed for the first time. These should be reviewed by the PPC regularly in the future, both in regard to their continuing suitability and in assessing how successfully they are being met.

The new method of selecting and appointing members of the PPC has been devised and received a measure of consensus in the Parish. The first selection following the process is now in hand.

The benefit of re-establishing an SVP Conference is agreed and early steps should be taken to start this process. This should go some way to meeting the great concern over inadequate welfare care in the Parish. It will also provide a better vehicle for organising visiting of the parishioners and determining the care and assistance the poor, infirm and housebound actually need. Too long have we talked about this provision without tackling the root of the problem. We need greater social awareness.

Spirituality activities in the Parish have been reviewed and a number of measures are in hand. There is still a great need for additional help with Children's Liturgy and more catechists are sought. This area might benefit from considerations being made in APPA. The ECHOES training should be repeated in the future.

Social activities are essential to help build our Parish community. Existing activities continue but need greater participation from all sections of the Parish. Steps will be taken to rejuvenate many of the very worthwhile events, such as the Wednesday Club. The new Social Group should be encouraged to continue organising new events. Although Parish Gatherings have been run to provide information on the Core Group's work, it is hoped that the new PPC will continue to use these gatherings both for the social opportunities they offer as well as to keep parishioners better informed.

A number of worthwhile steps have been proposed in improving Outreach. In particular the KIT initiative should now be developed both to welcome newcomers, particularly those from overseas, and to attempt to make contact with local lapsed Catholics. Attention needs to be given to links both with APPA and PACT.