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“As we grow in love, we grow in holiness. As we grow in holiness, we begin to become the very people that God intends us to be.”

ALLEN HUNT
Nine Words



A WORD FROM FR BARNABAS

For me this has been a good year.

I am very encouraged by the way people have responded to Stella and family. My question in any Parish is how do we get people to volunteer and also to be involved with Mission, because the two are linked. If people feel some ownership of their Parish, they are more likely to volunteer. This is my Parish, I have a voice, decisions aren't going to be made for me without consultation. Gradually during this past year we have been seeking to strengthen the Pastoral Council so that it becomes representative of the Parish and the way that our Parish is governed. The Church isn't a democracy and I have to work within certain parameters but we also need transparency. When people feel comfortable within the community, then we can begin to look at Mission because that is why the Parish of Newent and Blaisdon are here.

Thank you for all your hard work.

Fr B

'Certainly a life lived by faith resembles more an expedition up a mountain than a quiet evening spent reading in front of the fire; but anyone who embarks upon this expedition knows and experiences more and more that the adventure to which it invites us is worthwhile.'

Joseph Ratzinger from Faith in the Future

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

Who remembers, 'Divine Renovation'? Led initially by Father Aidan, we explored, as a Parish, what our purpose is, and how we can best fulfil it. Our purpose, being, to further the Kingdom of God here on earth.

It's a tough standard to be held accountable to.

So, what have we achieved in the past year?

We have been busy settling Father Barnabas in. It is appropriate, I believe, to offer him, on behalf of all of us, profound gratitude for his priestly ministry to us. As Chair of the Pastoral Council I have been close to his steer for the Parish, and am aware of his deep commitment to our spiritual and pastoral wellbeing.

We have kept the church and grounds in pretty good shape, in that nothing has fallen down or blown up yet. Thank you to the cleaners, gardeners, administrators, and maintenance personnel who turn up, unseen and unrecognised, and quietly get things done. You know who you are.

The development of the garden, aided by a legacy, and the renovation of Drumlanrig to receive tenants, was successfully overseen to completion this year by Julian Dowle. Thank you Julian.

The Finance Committee have kept us afloat in very challenging circumstances. We escaped the recent audit with a few minor quibbles that we will address in due course. Do ask Gail for a copy if you wish to see it. Thank you, financiers.

The Catechists have hosted a Lent Prayer Course ('Strength to Strength') and an Autumn Series (Soul Suppers) for Parishioners interested in deepening their faith, and their understanding of it. Attendance has been disappointing, and we will need to take a hard look at our provision in the future. Both series were held in response to requests from parishioners who chose not to attend them, so as you can see, we have a problem!

We are currently preparing four children to receive their First Holy Communion in November. There is no Liturgy Committee at present, but Parishioners are undergoing training by the Diocese with the aim of forming a team in the near future. Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion attended a Retreat recently to renew their commitment to their ministries. If you exercise one of these ministries, but were unable to attend the Retreat, please ask Gail for the slides. Thanks to Martin Mason for the hours he puts in preparing the music for the Mass and for Joe Skivington for supporting him. We're grateful too, for all the lay ministers who serve in the Sanctuary, and the Sacristans who prepare it. A mention too, for Zac Felton, who ably assists with projection. Thank you, Zac

Our Safeguarding Coordinator, an ex-officio member of the PPC, has, thank God, reported no issues of concern this year. Thank you, Jenny Heseltine, for persevering in this vital role.

The Friendship and Care Group are a small but dedicated team headed by Maria Coleman. Their work is limited by the diminishing number of volunteers. The Friendship and Care Group was augmented this year by a sub-group who took on responsibility for settling in our tenants, the Anthony Family from South Sudan. Thank you all.

The Pastoral Council has worked on embedding a Constitution to smarten up our act, and to give us a clearer idea of our role and our accountability. Sue Felton will be standing down as PPC Secretary this year. Thank you Sue, for your years of faithful service. Thank you, Gail, our indispensable Parish Secretary, for assisting her.

Through the hard work of volunteers the church is materially and financially sound. We are a caring community who support each other. We are well-lead by a good pastor. Much is happening that is very positive that we can thank God for, and I do.

However, we face some serious challenges. We are an ageing population and our volunteer base is shrinking alarmingly. We are just about managing, in part because a few people are undertaking multiple roles. This is unsustainable, and will need to be addressed.

I opened this report with a reminder of our purpose - to extend the Kingdom of God. There is some fabulous Kingdom work going on, as the Holy Spirit inspires us: working to keep the building standing, the finances straight, and the committees functional IS the work of the kingdom, but it is heavily weighted towards maintenance. We no longer have a committee that oversees mission, and I haven't heard anyone use the word 'evangelisation' for over a year. We need to find a means to redress the balance as a priority.

As your Pastoral Council seeks to put together the next Parish Plan, I ask that you:

1. Consider how you might contribute to the work of the Parish. If you're fit, can you join a committee or a working party? If you're unable to undertake physical work, will you pray for us? If you have a Charism or a skill, will you offer it to the Parish? If you're financially able to, could you increase your giving?
2. Join in the consultation exercise that the Pastoral Council will be undertaking for the 2020 Parish Plan

**With Love,
Mary Francis
Chair**



A WORD FROM THE VICE CHAIR

My official position is Vice Chair and I have officiated twice in this capacity when Mary has been unable to chair the meeting. My main contribution was to organise and run the Garden Party in July to celebrate our new garden and to raise money towards its upkeep. It seems to have been an enjoyable and successful event and we had a profit of £160. Otherwise, my role is the same as that of the other PPC members: to attend meetings regularly; to assist initiatives by other members; to help in the smooth running of our church. I planted up one of the new garden's beds, I help ensure that there is a team of Welcomers for Sundays, I assist the Friendship Group on occasion, I provide back-up for Gail I host the Aston Ingham Bible Study group, I hold a small poetry reading each month and I hope to host and present the third in the Soul Suppers sequence.

Christine Roy

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Jeanette asked me to join the PPC and take the minutes in 2014, five years ago.

Many things have happened in that time, many changes and of course people have come and gone. It is lovely to be involved with the running of the Parish and have a say in forth coming plans.

I would now love to hand this job onto someone else.

I just turn up to the meetings and take notes. I then type them up or Gail will do this for me if I am pushed for time.

I will continue in this role if needed, although there is more needed from a secretary than I am prepared to do at present.

Sue Felton

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

At 30th of September 2019 the current account balance was : £10,712. This was an increase of over £3,000 since the end of August 2019. The main reason for this increase was the annual tax rebate given by the government on donations in the plate which amounted to £2,000 for Newent (the maximum allowed), and £365 for Blaisdon.

The Diocese saw our healthy balance at the end of August and asked if they could not give us the additional loan, (£3,196), for the extra work that had been needed on the house. This change was excepted on condition that we could have the money if we needed it.

We are now in a position where we can pay the other annual charitable donation of £1,529.

In February 2018 the amount of money we had in the General Deposit Fund held by the Diocese was £28,598. At present this amount has decreased to £6,598. Hopefully with the Drumlanrig rent now coming in at £813 our reserves can be built up again.

The Parish Secretary account has a balance of just over £3,000 and the annual contributions to this account almost cover the outgoings.

Mike Rowe

Treasurer.

MAINTENANCE

Due to health issues I am not able to do as much as I would like. But where it has been possible I have kept some of the cost for maintenance limited. Small jobs like changing the light bulbs after doing a risk assessment which took longer than the job in hand. We have added further signs in the car park and are looking to updating the front sign.

After Gail getting several quotes the hedges have been maintained and looked quite neat for a while.

As Tom has been away the garden maintenance has been left to Pat Milsom Don and Maria Coleman, with Gail keeping some of the plants watered during the drier months.

In the office some of the equipment has needed tlc which Gail has called me in to help with.

The windows of the church and the house outside are cleaned twice a year they are next due just before Christmas and again before Easter.

It is sad that the fencing has already had to be repaired. Highlighted by the local postman that several posts were now coming apart. I have added new fixings to stabilise the problem but this will need to be kept in check.

The car park is still an issue with some of our church members. There is a suggestion for lines to be painted and measured out for parking spaces and the surface being relayed which is Tom is looking into. This is an expense as there are jobs that also have been put on the back burner for some time.

To help stop the crows digging up the lawn we have been looking at having the chimneys of Drumlanrig capped to try and alleviate the damage to lawn as crows are living in the stack, but it has been difficult finding roofers.

Some of the things for the future

- new flooring in the back room

- Painting throughout the church - this has not been done since the refurbishment. Currently Tom is looking at various option and costs. The outside back fire door needs painting. Some of these could be completed in house.
- The second sink in the kitchen needs the taps to be secured as there is either a washer or nut needed to be tightened or there is a clip missing from the tap base.
- There is a noisy extractor fan in one of the toilets which has been turned off for the last few years.
- Car park gates need washing.
- Outside fire door in back room needs painting.
- Look at the costs of having a firm deep clean the church once a year.
- A carpet to be cleaned after the painting is complete.
- Replacing the handle on the kitchen door so that we know when it is locked.
- Having timers put on the heaters in the back room so that they aren't left on.

Tom Heseltine and Steve Ebsworth.



BLAISDON GROUP

Since September 2018 when we said farewell to Fr John, the Blaisdon community has continued to meet every Sunday at 11 (except Christmas and Easter) for a non-Eucharistic service. We are a small group and so we take turns to lead the service. The format follows the readings of the day with the liturgy of the word, using hymns, prayer, reflection, commentary and discussion. There is an interesting variety in people's different approaches and it challenges us to dig deeper into the text and reassess our own attitudes and responses. Additionally, Fr Barnabas celebrates Mass with us on the first Friday evening of the month and this is followed by a soup and pudding supper, a chance to catch up with everyone.

Regular events in the calendar such as the Carol Service and the Passover which we share with the Anglican community and Newent parishioners, continue to be well supported, as have the Blaisdon Old Boys reunions and Remembrance service. At Advent we met as usual for our retreat weekend at Nympsfield with three generations of families coming together. This year, we will be in Somerset as Nympsfield is unavailable. CAFOD, GARAS, the Forest food bank and the Seamen's Mission receive donations of money, groceries and clothing as appropriate.

The music group is as vibrant and essential as ever, challenging and inspiring the congregation to learn a new Mass setting recently.

We try hard to keep everyone 'in the loop' with a WhatsApp group (plus email or phone calls for a few not subscribing to new fangled technology) and Gail is able to keep track and publish our news further. It's been an interesting year and has led to us taking more responsibility for organising ourselves. We're very grateful for the whole hearted support of Fr Barnabas and Fr Sean.

We are very pleased to have been involved in the settling of the Anthony family and we are getting to know more of our Forest Catholic community too, joining with them for Christmas and Easter liturgies.

The future remains precarious but the Spirit blows where it will.

Clare Viner

OFFICE REPORT

It is now two plus years working in the office, which had to be cleared out completely then thinned down. The Upper Room has been developed as a small prayer and meeting space which the sun shines in even on a dull day.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank those who have supported and helped. In particular those who give up their time, Val Young, Kathleen Cooke, Yvonne Slack, Ann Shaw, Joan Lumb, Chris Roy, Collette Corley and Paul Spencer. I must remember Margi Fothergill who was a great support at the beginning and in moving she will be missed they help put together the newsletter and leaflets that we produce. There are the continued supports of the Line Managers who gave up their time also to put procedures in place that enable me to work efficiently in a safe environment.

We have updated the Directory under the new laws of the GDPR which means that we have to now be more careful who is given information and unless we have the written sign consent we are not allowed to include some people in some of what we do especially where the internet is concerned. This is difficult for people to understand.

The libraries are set up something I did in my own time mainly, it needs someone to make sure that it is kept tidy. We have many books cds and dvds to share many we have two. I would like to encourage people not to just put in the cupboard as they are all catalogued.

There are still things that need to be put in place to make it an efficient environment but improvements happen all the time with the support of the diocese. I thank people for their prayers and support and hope that they think their money is being used wisely.

WATERY LANE BIBLE STUDY

We have had to stop as not many came; it ended up just the four of us. Two married couples and when life affects one couple the other gets left high and dry. We had some interesting programs and had access to the resources of Missing Peace. We did the CaFE course of Let it Be and The Big Picture. We did join the Western Way Chapel when they put on the Bible Course by the Bible Society which was a brilliant course

PRAYER

Our last ditch at getting people involved in the Year of Prayer and will be taking place at the time of the AGM – the Sacred Spaces; we have invited the other churches to this and hopefully they will come.

I was asked to take on the prayer in the parish two years ago. I felt that we have the liturgy so what could I do outside the liturgy. The prayer diary was put together and the second edition has just been printed. This is to encourage everyone in the parish to pray for each other. This year I have included the gifts of the spirit, so that we pray each day for the people of the parish and the gifts for the parish to receive. I believe that our prayer warriors are using the sheet as the Holy Spirit is definitely moving.

Prayer Ministry was enabled by Fr John and Fr Barnabas, although we have six people who have been willing to have training and help. At times though people seem reticent to come for prayer, we think it is that stepping up and asking.

We still have the prayer chain, but we get more prayer requests from outside the parish. Because we are linked to other prayer chains these prayers do get answers. God answers when we come together in prayer.

I started the Call to Prayer on the second Monday of the Month. It is sad that some weeks it is only Steve and I here but if we do it perhaps more will come.

I believe that pray can be in everything we do. So the Film afternoon started, I found a selection of Christian based films that talks about prayer and spiritual life these are not theological usually but we have had laughter and tears. We have a core of three or four people coming, we hope more will come but we take heart that if two or more are there then Jesus is also.

COME AND SEE

We are about to start another series where people come and speak together about their journeys with God. The first series we heard a huge variety of people telling us what affected them and brought them closer to Christ. We were impressed with each person, with the youngest being Luke Wathen. Fr John, Fr Barnabas, Tim Meadows, Pat Phillips, Siobhan Smith, Jenny Heseltine, Mary Francis, Monsignor Liam, Dr Richards, Martin Mason, Mike Hencher and Gail Ebsworth.

All inspiring talks and we look forward to the next series starting in December with Matt Anscombe, David Hebbes, Sarah Adams, Lyn Murray and David Kinghorn from Gloucester City Mission. We hope that people do come so that they too can be inspired by how God is work now in this day.

FRIENDSHIP AND CARE

I am very fortunate to have such a lovely responsive team to help in emergencies but also help when small matters are required eg. Visits to hospitals with parishioners who may not have family nearby or even just visits to their homes for company now and again. We have had visits to Violets Szabo in the past and this year looking forward to the [ABBA](#) Valley Mail Voice Choir in the Spring and afternoon tea and possibly Lunches in the winter months. We do need more volunteers as many of our current team are struggling themselves. Pat Milsom, Don and I have offered more help to Tom and Steve for the gardening etc.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A number of minor issues were dealt with during the year and it would appear that there is nothing currently outstanding. May I issue a reminder that completed Risk Assessments which cover most current parish activities are available in the health and safety folder kept in the parish office should anyone need access. A blank copy is also available from Craig Grewcock. Alongside this is a full copy of the diocesan health and safety policy manual for reference purposes.

December 2019 will see the next annual round of electrical testing requirements which will cost several hundred pounds and which will cover the church, office and Drumlanrig.

Craig Grewcock

SACRISTANS

Jenny would just like to say a big thank you to all the sacristans who come in early to help make sure that all runs as smoothly as possible. Thank you for all your time and effort on our behalf.

- **IS THERE A COMMENT, A WORRY, A CONCERN THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO BRING UP WITH THE PASTORAL COUNCIL?**
- **IS THERE SOMETHING YOU REALLY LIKE AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?**

This is your space to do so, fill in this form and put in the RED BOX in the foyer. You may wish to remain anonymous or include your name but all comments will be taken seriously.

Thank you for your support.
