

The Paired Parish of
SACRED HEART and St JOHN STONE
in the Archdiocese of Liverpool

PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT
in preparation for the
PARISH OPEN FORUM JUNE 2ND 2016

The Parish Vision Statement was born from the work begun with the tsunami of change:

- new Archbishop in May 2014
- November 2014 the Southport Pastoral Area Plan was launched
- Augustinians leave the two churches in January 2015
- Archdiocese sends one priest where there were three
- moves to increase the unity and find out how to join
- February 2015 Parish Open Meetings, the Research and Review Teams
- The Listening Process and the Parish Discernment Team
- July 2nd and November 5th Parish Open Forums 2015
- with the Month of Mourning in spiritual preparation the Parish committed to the Vision Statement and 4 stated Mission outlines in November 2015 as a work in progress with the understanding that at....

PENTECOST 2016 we would review the Vision Statement, the work so far and formulate the Way Ahead with the work from the Discernment Team

THANK YOU to all who have participated heartily in this necessary challenge to find a way forward together as Catholics in the Archdiocese, part of the Southport Church, with a valued legacy from the Augustinians and the heritage of Sacred Heart and St John Stone as separate parishes before, for some time, being joined in ministry and mission.

Our community of HeartStone,
with Jesus Christ at the centre,
will strive to be united in vision and mission
so that all might find a place of welcome,
prayer and loving outreach when in need.

We are living our Parish Vision through commitments to
**WELCOMING, OUTREACH, SPIRITUALITY and
COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY**

PARISH LIFE TODAY is lived out in various forms of partnership, some activities are better served by one kind of partnership or another :
e.g.: distinct church or paired churches
neighbouring Catholic parishes
Southport Pastoral Area
the local Ainsdale Ecumenical Covenant
with people or groups of Good Will in society.

SOUTHPORT PASTORAL AREA PLAN declares in commitment to mission:
With the numbers of Catholics falling and the decline in participation at mass and in parishes by existing Catholics,

“to accomplish evangelisation, changes are needed to:

- *deepen our own faith hope and love*
- *encourage the spirit of collaboration*
- *help us do better what we already do*
- *make more effective use of resources, being flexible to local needs”*

The Pastoral Area committed to carry out the Plan under 4 Headings:
Mission and Formation – Laity Involvement
Ministry to, with and by our Young People
Communications
Resources

Our Parish Vision and Missionary Commitments includes these categories of the Pastoral Area Plan with a slightly different order , with a strategy for each of the – now - 5 Priorities for Mission, each with a strategy involving:

- a Priority Leader from the Vision Team working with the priest
- a learning community of volunteers to join in
- ways of formation and sustaining the relationships for ministry
- spiritual life and prayer for the shared gifts from God to serve

PRIORITY 1: COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

COLLABORATION IN MINISTRY: MISSION & FORMATION

“The laity needs to evolve: it is time to step up and be open to new roles and responsibilities if the church communities so appreciated by young and old are to **remain** in some form and be **welcoming, relevant, inclusive and connected, reaching out** to the wider population, not remote, marginalised, exclusive and disconnected....More than even before, we need to work together to build trust, friendship, strengthen the sense of belonging and make good use of resources available.” *Thus speaks the Pastoral Area Plan.*

The Parish Listening process heard overwhelmingly parishioners saying that
**to be effective lay people’s involvement
is vital for growth and development as a Church.**

The Priority of Collaborative Ministry is our effort to respond to this need.

OUR STRATEGY

SHARING IN LEADERSHIP.....listening and inspired decisions.

We owe much gratitude to those who have been sharing in leadership, some for many years, in the previous “Parish Councils”. What I have called the “Discernment Team” have been marvellous in this new phase of finding a Vision of unity and mission. They are: Gina Steed, Mike Thornber, Ann Rothwell, Anne Bradshaw, Dave Pountney, Monica Gannon, Clare McConnell. Some have had to prematurely end their service already, but the team was committed until September to help me respond to the parish’s call for a renewed form of “Parish Council”.

I can now present with great confidence the work we have done in the Discernment Team, so that from September 2016 we will have:

- a new council called “The Parish Vision Team”
- its purpose is to share in the priest’s oversight and responsibility to put into practice the Vision through the action of the Priorities of Mission.

We begin now to select and form this new team by

- inviting nominations of people who feel called by the Holy Spirit to offer service in this way of shared leadership
- an information evening to find out more about what is asked:
Wednesday 8th June in St John Stone Red Room, 7.30pm
- receiving the full text of the outline of the new Team from the Discernment Team at the liturgy of Pentecost
- discussing any questions or improvements at the Parish Open Forum

The existing Discernment Team end their service at the start of September.

The Church Managing Teams will continue to play an invaluable part in the work and service of the day to day life of the parish. Their membership may change, but usually they meet monthly separately, and twice a year together. At the paired meeting on Monday 13th June we can work together on results from the Forum and clarity of how the Teams link to the Vision Team’s service.

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

The Pastoral Area Plan outlines 4 particular areas of necessary Mission and Formation: Liturgy Sacramental, Pastoral Care and Outreach, Spirituality. There are separate sections below in this outline for Pastoral Care and Outreach, and Spirituality, but here let me say:

For Ministry in General, our strategy has begun:

- collating with the Parish Administrator the personal information of all who are at present giving ministry, in their teams, with written descriptions of the roles and the service asked of the co-ordinators of the ministries
- reading “The Sign We Give” to begin the learning which helps people
- Developing ways of supporting, formation and gratitude to ministers; at present the Corpus Christi commitment and Autumn team meetings
- the necessary Well-Being actions for volunteers and staff
- for those who feel the Holy Spirit is calling them to ministry, we offer good formation, spiritual and practical, with the “Faith for Life” process from the Archbishop’s adult faith formation leaders from LACE

Liturgy:

We are blest with generous service in the liturgical ministries, and will

- sustain our teams with the annual year plan preparation in the Autumn
- adopt the rota style based on the liturgical calendars
- ensure we have good induction procedures and safeguarding processes
- look again at how best to develop the united music ministry

Sacramental:

“The recruitment and sustaining of Catechists ...with regular sharing for learning, support and appreciation of good practise....” is a vital goal from the Pastoral Area Plan.

MINISTRY TO THE SICK AND HOUSEBOUND

Thank you especially to those who have made this possible after the Augustinian priests. We have begun to co-ordinate and develop this ministry, and need very much for more volunteers to come forward to keep it going.

FAMILIES: we will actively pursue ways of attracting and supporting families in the life of HeartStone since we do not have our own school to include. A good example of other actions we will take to help grow the faith and sharing of parents to include their children in Catholic life is the following:

“Celebrating Catechists Helping Parents Passing On Faith”

is a shared event of the whole Pastoral Area on Saturday July 9th inviting all who serve in the With You Always Communion Initiation, Children’s Liturgy of the Word, and Baptism preparation to:

- thank our catechists for their talent and work
- share experience for better learning and improvements
- prepare for the changes to next year’s catechesis
- deciding on annual plans to support and appreciate our catechists

Confirmation will in future be celebrated at age 14 from 2020.

MARRIAGE: the implications of the Pope’s latest teaching on Marriage and the Vocation of Parents might open up some new demands and opportunities, and one parishioner in now newly trained for marriage preparation.

CATECHISTS are also needed for the newly emerging RCIA, the Baptism Preparation and the Scripture sessions.

AND VERY IMPORTANTLY WE WILL BRING NEW CLARITY AND SUPPORT FOR THE MINISTRY CO-ORDINATORS

hoping that they can

- meet with teams from September and
- with the chance to share as a ministry team what is going well and what is needed and
- formulate a calendar for the year running from Advent to Advent,

PRIORITY 2: SPIRITUALITY

The gradual development of personal spirituality and faithfulness over the years, as it was for Jesus himself, needs a healthy combination of

- regular participation in the liturgy and Scriptures of our faith
- personal prayer and meeting with God
- being influenced by and responding to our context and the signs of the times.
- we include ancient and new devotions in the diversity of spiritual needs: rosary, Stations of the Cross and Resurrection, Mass Sheets now, putting in own communion breads, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Soulcare Meditation, adoration, praying the Psalms, Divine Mercy, Neo-Catechumenate, Cursillo...

OUR STRATEGY

LITURGY AND SACRAMENTAL:

- **the liturgical cycle is the vital source of our holiness**
- We will develop and train **Lay Funeral Ministers** as soon as possible

PRAYER PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL:

We have begun with the Archdiocesan Spirituality Project, **IRENAEUS**, who now:

- lead the Missionary Prayer Week called “Pentecost is for Living”
- will discern further with us to start the Living Christ Retreat and a team to present it, hopefully to begin in October 2016
- offer all kinds of exciting sessions and courses for scripture and faith sharing

FAITH SHARING Our Parish Team called **“GIFT” (Growing In Faith Together)** will welcome people after “Pentecost is for Living” to a gathering on Tuesday 7th June for continued support and discernment of ways to sustain the growth in faith, including faith sharing groups.

St John Stone church is now open – on a key pad – for people to pray during the day.

SCRIPTURE:

“Sharing Scripture” on a Wednesday evening is well appreciated by the few who come: why so few? How can it increase?

“Lectio Divina” will move to become one of the Wednesdays per month instead of the Sharing Scripture.

Ministers of the Word/Readers are generally good, but preparation by some is important and opportunities for learning and growth are often not taken up.

CARE FOR CREATION, Our Common Home

Ecology and green concerns are integral to Christian discipleship now.

We will build on the small group meetings from CAFOD and Pope Francis teaching and audit our procedures and premises to ensure good practice.

PRIORITY 3. LOVING OUTREACH

This Priority embodies a vital part of the Archdiocesan Mission Statement:

Taking to heart the last words of the Lord Jesus, we will go into the world to proclaim the Good News to the whole of creation.

Archbishop Malcolm in his Home Mission Sunday Pastoral Letter summons us all to this evangelisation: **“building missionary parishes....deepening, sharing and proclaiming our faith, sensitively and confidently....transforming the communities we live in by serving our brothers and sisters...”**

The Catholic word “evangelisation” includes both loving service and telling of the faith as ways of caring outreach. Good Works and Words of Good News.

OUR STRATEGY

With the learning community of this priority we will

- conduct a prayerful audit of the life of MERCY IN THE PARISH reflecting
- the corporal works of mercy:
 - feed the hungry give drink to the thirsty
 - clothe the naked welcome the stranger heal the sick
 - visit the imprisoned bury the dead
- the spiritual works of mercy:
 - counsel the doubtful instruct the ignorant
 - admonish sinners comfort the afflicted forgive offences
 - bear patiently those who do us ill pray for the living and the dead
- We will cultivate ways of reaching out to each other's churches in HeartStone, in pilgrimage towards increasing the unity and common mission
- our main aim is to sustain the generosity of those loving services already in place

CHARITY AND JUSTICE

The Elderly: the various ways of contact and care given already can be celebrated and reviewed through the "Let's Live Well" research project led by Faiths4Change, specialising in affordable warmth and nutrition

The Lonely: are people of all ages and incomes, and awareness of this need is high in the parish

Mental Illness: ecumenical research and learning in the Autumn is planned, to help us grow in knowledge and skills. We are participating with the whole Archdiocese in learning Dementia Friendly ways for our relationships and welcoming in parish life

Bereavement Care has various aspects to it in the life of HeartStone, from the Ministry of Consolation team, funeral support, to social opportunities to gather. This ministry will grow as the time arrives...because dedicated service is not often taken up yet, a common fact in many parishes

PARTNERSHIPS are key in helping others, and as well as the service of its own, our SVP team and other parishioners have marvellous links with Marian Care, Foodbank, the Soup Kitchen and increasingly with Ainsdale Community Care. This way of working is essential in the coming challenges around

Welcoming the Stranger: Asylum Seekers and Migrants are more likely than Refugees to come to Southport we have learnt, and when there is good liaison we can join in with skills to help newcomers integrate into the community. Meanwhile we support others with donations of money, clothing and mother and baby needs through MRANG.

FUNDRAISING for charities and good causes:

There is a great deal of generosity in this aspect of parish life.

- we will decide afresh on the **Parish Chosen Charities** for the year 2016/17 beginning in Advent.
- The now combined **Parish Social Committee** will continue to work with Donna, the SJS Club manager to grow in unity and co-ordinating events

SPIRITUAL OUTREACH:

The RCIA, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, is the principal way the Pastoral Area is committed to welcoming and accompanying newcomers to find out about faith and maybe become Catholic.

- we will host one of the two groups to welcome people in the Pastoral Area from this September
- a learning session will be available soon for parishioners to learn how to help, especially becoming a sponsor to befriend new people
- we will use the National RCIA Network to ensure best practice and support
- a 3 year outlook will guide our decisions about progressing in the parish

FAMILIES: a learning community will outline how we can improve the invitation for families to participate in our

- Baptism preparation and continuing support
- Liturgy of the Word for Children
- Brownies
- With You Always catechesis
- Servers

YOUNG PEOPLE

We will continue our hopes for the **SCY initiative** in the Pastoral Area (Southport Catholic Youth) and if we can find people with the commitment, we can develop other opportunities like

- leaders to run the liturgy of the word for teenagers during mass
- confirmation preparation for 14 year olds
- links to Christ the King High School
- extra support for #OLLI
- research and using the new "Faith In Action" process of helping young people value the service they give in church and society

We have had Melissa from the Ecumenical partnership this year: probably we will again pay to have a Pais worker next year, but thereafter shall we have a Catholic paid youth worker for the Pastoral Area, or an Ecumenical one for Ainsdale?

GROWING OLDER....APPROACHING DEATH

Is there a place for spirituality to help in these aspects of living?

The Hospice movement is advocating we talk about such things.

ECUMENISM

Christian Unity is often included in Outreach...and we will continue to maintain our substantial commitment to the annual round of shared activities in the Churches Together in Ainsdale – recently renewed – Covenant.

We do need new representatives on the committee though.....

2017 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther starting the Protestant Reformation ...how can we use the Week of Prayer for Unity in January and the Methodist 150th anniversary and other events to celebrate that the Reformation is over?

INTER – FAITH

With Islam so much in the news, though mostly corrupted forms and abuse of the true faith, the Catholic call to honour all who seek God by others paths is not a prominent part of Southport Catholic life, but we will keep our minds open in faithful ness to the teaching of our church.

SHARING COMMUNITY LIFE

Feeling part of a community of faith is an invaluable part of being Catholic. There is a lot of diversity in attitudes and outlooks among Catholics these days, which means community is all the more important. Growing in friendships, social entertainments, living with a sense of belonging – these are massive blessings in HeartStone and as the Listening Process brought out wonderfully, faith improves with social life and laughter as well as spiritual life and church!

The Parish Social Committee helps avoid clashes of events, the **Hall in Sacred Heart** is a great asset for all ages, the **Social Centre at St John Stone** provides vital service not only for the parish community, but local people and society also with regular groups that build up community. In particular there is great and generous service through the **Bingo both at SJS and SH** which is so important to many people.

PRIORITY 4. WELCOMING

A strength in the parish in some aspects of life, this Priority is very much linked together with Outreach as responding to the strong wish of many parishioners for a renewed Catholic attitude of **inclusivity**.

From moral dilemmas to the Year of Mercy – from new attitudes and behaviours to changes in the liturgy – perfect Catholic practice to people doing as well as they can – learning how to have the spirit of welcome at the heart of parish life in all it groups and activities is an exciting challenge, favoured by many parishioners.

OUR STRATEGY

Everybody's Welcome is an Archdiocesan Resource that the learning community might benefit from in auditing what we do well and where we could improve.

Why They Left? Learning from what made Catholics fall away, or walk away, or stay away can be a good help to not just repeating avoidable mistakes, and ensuring we are welcoming people back to an improved community.

Those Already Greeting might be a good start in going deeper: greeters, hospitality ministry etc. We can all grow into being more welcoming of each other within the shared parish life, noticing when people are missing from mass and how to follow up.

The Spirituality involved in this Priority is very much about being able to be open to God's action, to the future, to the new and sometimes difficult as described in the parish mission prayer.

Ways and Means of Making People Feel Welcome will become more and more a conscious part of all group activities in HeartStone

A New Welcome Pack will be produced in harmony with the website and clear procedures to welcome people who contact us.

Safeguarding is integral to reassuring everyone of in all our activities that people of all ages are respected, valued, listened to and safely welcomed.

PRIORITY 5. COMMUNICATIONS

During the work of the Discernment Team we realized that this 5th Priority was important to concentrate on as well as the other 4 that explicitly came from the Listening Process. Personal communication - with the demands of making time – as well as technological communications, all have their part to play. Good communication will serve the demands of growing in unity, and help resolve conflicts more smoothly.

OUR STRATEGY

Monica, the Parish Administrator, is the big asset to enable good communications which are vital for all the other Priorities of Mission.

We are replacing the existing phone exchange in the Parish House with a simpler, cheaper one, linked to the Broadband which will run from the parish not the club in future.

The **Southport Churches** website is up and running, we are pursuing our renewal of a united website for the paired churches of HeartStone, but it is a slow process with the existing contract!

New noticeboards are in process of design, thanks to Sacred Heart Managing Team.

The **newsletter** is a constant source of praise and criticism, and is part of the ongoing review by Monica as the Priority Leader and those who will join her learning community.

RESOURCES

- 2 churches - well maintained: traditional and modern
- Beautiful grounds in both
- Sacred Heart Hall with kitchen
- St John Stone Club with full time manager and back up from LACE: Hall, Little Church, kitchen and area, lounge bar area, games room
- Priest for both churches in one parish life
- Parish Office with part time Parish Administrator, 2 computers and full printing machines: Office for meeting and Red Room for meeting, overflow in Dining Room and other room.
- Parish House for priest's home with Housekeeper
- Adequate bank balance and income

MAINTENANCE is a constant demand and volunteers are not able to cover all, and volunteers are getting fewer! An annual schedule will be drawn up, and include the invaluable **Gardening Days**

THE PARISH OPEN FORUM is a vital and major part of the Parish Discernment to ensure good decisions by the Holy Spirit and us.

You can participate in various ways:

- contribute in writing or email to the discussion with your observations and suggestions
- come and share in the work on June 2nd
- start reflecting on how you can contribute to the Priorities of Mission
- a follow on meeting will enable those not able to join in on 2nd June to participate and receive an update

*Thank God and each other that we have the faith to share,
and a Vision to live out together
in service of God's Kingdom among us today.
Do please continue to make prayer the basis of all we do.*

Prayer for Mission in our Time and Place

God of the Universe,
we give you thanks for all that we share,
for the faith and the community that sustains us.
God of our lives, you are challenging us
to follow you into the future,
inviting us to new ventures, new challenges,
new ways to care, new ways to touch the hearts of all.

When we are fearful of the unknown, give us courage.

When we worry that we are not up to the task,
remind us that you would not call us
if you did not believe in us.

When we get tired or disappointed
with the way things are going,
remind us that you can bring change and hope
out of the most difficult situations.

Bless to us, O Lord the doors we open,
the thresholds we cross,
the roads that lie before us.
Go with us as we go, sharing the journey!