

St Elizabeth's, Minsteracres

Annual Parish Report 2019-2020



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Cemetery Working Group
3. Church Restoration Committee
4. Justice and Peace Group
5. Liturgy Group
6. Villa El Salvador
7. Minsteracres Retreat Centre
8. Finance Committee
9. Social Committee

1. Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Parish Report for 2020. As in previous years the Parish Council continues to be grateful to everyone who contributes to what happens in and around St Elizabeth's, Minsteracres: our parish priest, the wider community, chairs and members of sub-groups, those who are able to support / volunteer, and our parish community for supporting the liturgy.

Membership

Fr Jeroen – Ex Officio to August 2020
Fr Jenish – Ex Officio
Rev David Collins – Ex Officio
Susan Collins – Chair from January 2020
Frank McDonald – Vice Chair from 2016
Cecilia Port- Secretary since January 2020
Frank Balloch – Chair to January 2020
Martin Deasy
Alan Hodgson
Lucilla Solly

We met for our annual parish away-day in mid January. We reaffirmed our three key priorities:

- Reaching Out
- Faith Development
- Communication

We reviewed our activities against those priorities and agreed activities for the coming year. As we moved into March it became apparent that most of these activities would have to be put on hold as we were required to follow the Government and Diocesan guidelines in response to COVID-19. Because of the uncertainty we mothballed our parish with the exception of a weekly email from Fr Jeroen. Fr Jeroen and I met in July to discuss how we could reach out increase our communications and ultimately reopen the church to Sunday worship. This has gone very well with the help of you all, but which made it all the more sad to close the door again at the beginning of this month. During this second lockdown we will continue opening the church up for private prayer 9:30 -12:00 on a Sunday.

The Parish Council has been meeting since July in a hybrid manner, some attending in person at a safe distance in the Library, others joining virtually via Zoom. In October we took the decision to invest in a Zoom Pro account, which will be available for use by all the sub-groups in the Parish. Our challenge as a parish is to rethink how we reach out and connect at a time when we need that connection probably more than we have before.

We have also agreed to continue with live streaming. We are investing in new equipment to improve the quality and we encourage you to engage with the mass if you are unable to attend in person. We are working to update our parish web page and now have a Twitter account. We are mindful that not all parishioners have access to the Internet and so will continue to provide hard copy. Our challenges / priorities for the rest of 2020 and 2021 are to get Sunday mass re-established once again as soon as possible and bring us together as much and as safely as we can.

2. Cemetery Working Group

The group at this time consists of James Harris, Monica Rutherford and Maureen Parker. We look forward to working with Fr. Jenish to ensure that the cemetery continues to be the special place of dignity reflecting the ethos of Minsteracres.

The group was last able to meet at the start of the year. Despite the difficulties of the current circumstances, the upkeep and maintenance of the cemetery has been attended to. The most important issue when we last met, namely the entrance to the cemetery, has now been resurfaced, thus ensuring safe access.

Work has been ongoing to ensure that both digital and paper records are accurate and up to date. The mapping of the cemetery to inform the best use of the available space has been under the direction of Fr. Jeroen. Hopefully this will continue under the guidance of Fr. Jenish

Fees will be due for review in January.

There are concerns regarding ongoing repairs to the wooden crosses in the cemetery, specifically their rapid deterioration and high maintenance requirements. A quotation was obtained from a firm of memorial masons, but this was considered to be too expensive. An alternative has not yet been proposed that meets the required longevity and maintenance requirements.

We look forward to planning to safely resume meetings to ensure that outstanding issues can be dealt with appropriately.

3. Church Restoration Committee

The committee is currently without a chair. The priorities from the quinquennial survey were outlined by Kevin Doonan. The safety measures for the choir loft balcony have been finalised and the work commissioned. The repairs to the clock have been approved and actioned.

4. Justice and Peace Group

Asylum Seekers - The annual appeal for the Diocesan Refugee Project made by Rosaleen and Ann in early January raised £1120. As usual a very generous response from our small parish. Whilst the drop-in centre in Summerhill Grove started the year as usual, it closed due to the lockdown in March and has been unable to reopen. However it continued to provide much needed support to hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers and their families. In part this was made possible by a one-off grant from the Albert Gubay Foundation and by the ongoing generosity of parishes and individuals. As a result the project was able to send digital supermarket vouchers to the mobile phones of destitute clients to purchase goods to the value of £35. Those with children received additional vouchers and other clients received a £20 voucher each month instead of the normal food bags. The one-off grant will be spent by the end of October after which destitute asylum seekers will be reliant on the support of parishes like our own. Sara Harris was appointed as the new Project Manager to replace John Dowling who stepped down from the post in April.

Traidcraft - Whilst sales of our fairly traded goods was in decline during 2019 and early 2020, apart from continuing strong support for the sale of biscuits for the refugee project, following lockdown we were obviously unable to sell any of our goods. As a result Eileen donated our stock either to Minsteracres or to local food banks. We will review the position once we are able to meet again for coffee after mass. Given the limited demand we may concentrate on selling biscuits and Christmas cards. During the year we donated £200 from our Traidcraft account to Cafod.

Events - A number of events planned for the year were inevitably cancelled, including our annual frugal lunch and various talks and presentations. We are keenly aware of the need for social and justice and peace events to bring us back together when it is safe to do so. Geoff Bockett is primed and ready to update parishioners on recent developments at Minsteracres and to lead a guided walk around the Shrubbery, and we have other speakers lined up for next year.

Heavenfield Partnership - The Heavenfield Partnership Justice and Peace Group has been one of the most active areas of partnership working. Unfortunately a meeting planned in March had to be cancelled and we have been unable to meet since to discuss possible joint activities.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Jim Darlington

5. Liturgy Group

Lockdown earlier in the year had a significant impact on the liturgical life of our parish with the opportunity for congregational worship only returning in August. So after a significant hiatus it was good that our liturgy group was able to meet in mid October to look to the future and begin planning our liturgical programme for the next few months. Unfortunately recently introduced restrictions mean that some of this planning has been in vain but perhaps I can take this opportunity to share some of that planning which either went ahead or yet might still bear fruit.

Rosary Rally - to conclude the Marian month of October it was decided to hold a rosary rally in the church to coincide with a national rosary event on that day, concluding with benediction. Whilst attendance was very low, just making it into double figures, it was well received.

Christ the King - Bishop Robert had offered to come and celebrate mass on this the last Sunday in the Church's year, to mark the commencement of the jubilee celebrations for the 300th anniversary of the Passionist Congregation. Unfortunately it is very unlikely that this go ahead but the bishop has offered to return next year sometime in the autumn.

Posada - we had hoped that we might be able to continue our tradition of the Mary and Joseph figures travelling around the parish this Advent but in the end decided that in the current circumstances the risks associated with this activity could not easily be mitigated and so with a heavy heart we decided to postpone this for 2020. To mark this journey though we have decided to erect the crib in the church at the beginning of Advent and have the figures of Mary and Joseph make their way slowly to it. We hope this in some way makes up for the loss of the normal posada.

Carol Service - we are exploring the possibility of holding some form of carol service nearer Christmas but of course this would need to be conducted in a Covid safe and compliant manner. This would at the very least mean it would need to be held outdoors or possibly even in our cars in a "drive-in" fashion. Ultimately of course this might not be able to go ahead but we will endeavour to make it happen if we can.

Christmas Masses - we estimate our normal Christmas mass attendance at something between 250 and 300 but with a church limit of around 30, when we take families occupying benches into account, it is highly unlikely that we will be able to accommodate anything like that number this year. Nevertheless we have agreed to have 4 Christmas masses to try our best to

meet the expected demand. Three of these will be vigil masses with a single mass at 9.30 on Christmas Day. The three vigil masses will each have a different focus with the first being child centric and will include a short crib service. Another will have a small section of the choir supporting the liturgy and the third will have no singing. More specific details of the times of these services will be provided at the beginning of advent when we will open the booking system for these masses.

Busy Church - Fr Jenish and I have met with Jan a couple of times recently to think about how we might re-instate busy church in a safe and appropriate manner. Jan is currently discussing options with the families and once plans are further developed we will make them known.

Faith Development - a partnership wide faith development initiative is planned for Advent. This will be based on the Sycamore programmes and delivered in an online manner with the opportunity for remote discussion. More details will be made available nearer its launch.

Re-ordering of the Sanctuary - our more observant mass goers might have noticed some small changes to the layout of the sanctuary in recent weeks. The first change was to replace the crucifix which resides in the alcove above the tabernacle, this was followed by the re-introduction of real candles then the addition of a second lectern. A change which might be more difficult to spot is that Mother Regina has recently made a new altar cover and a full new set of altar linen including corporals, purificators and lavabo cloths. She has recently embarked on a project to create two new altar cloths having earlier altered some of the vestments so as to be a better fit for Fr Jenish. We are very grateful for all the work she has done.

Finally can I thank on behalf of all of us everyone who is involved in the planning and delivery of the liturgical life of our parish. Without the help of the stewards, cleaners, readers, servers, extraordinary ministers, sacristans, and anyone else involved, our liturgies would either be severely restricted or at worst curtailed. So thank you all for your help it is much appreciated.

David Collins

6. Villa El Salvador

I have had news from Sr. Maeve that the 3 Sisters are to leave VeS at the earliest opportunity. They are not being replaced.

I did explore the possibility of making contact with another responsible person out there, who might be continuing their work, however there will no longer be a Passionist presence. Who or what organisation is replacing the Sisters I have yet to discover.

I have discussed the question of donating in the future, with the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, through whom, until very recently, I sent our donations, and have been advised that it is most unlikely that a safe and responsible connection can be continued.

Since 1997, we have sent the Sisters £87,604 ! So we can certainly not only be proud of our support, but be reassured that we must have made a huge difference to the community of VeS. It is with regret that we should sever ties, but we have to be realistic, we cannot continue if we have no idea how or where our donations are being distributed.

On behalf of the Sisters, I must thank you all for your generous constancy over all these years. Perhaps we should consider an alternative Mission? Meanwhile, I shall wrap up the VeS account - I just hope that my Mother in law, Joan Gibson (who was the inspiration behind this Appeal) will not now comeback to haunt me!

Bryony Gibson

7. Minsteracres Retreat Centre

The annual report and accounts for Minsteracres Retreat Centre were presented at a virtual AGM this year as part of an annual Board away day. At the best of times this is a slight misnomer because we hold the day at Minsteracres but it is an opportunity to spend some time looking more strategically at some aspects of Minsteracres and its mission.

If anyone wishes to see the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2019, I have made these available to the Chair of the Parish Council, who can forward an electronic copy to you.

St Joseph's Province which makes us an annual allowance, listened to concerns we expressed regarding urgent maintenance or capital works which were either already identified as necessary or anticipated to become necessary in the foreseeable future. In response the Province front loaded their support for Minsteracres so that we received £200K for 2020 and will receive £150K in 2021 and £100K in 2022.

The arrival of the pandemic has meant that we have had to put on hold capital expenditure apart from a few items which have benefitted from some external support. However, from a cashflow position the additional upfront funds have enabled us to meet the challenge to income and revenue expenditure posed by the lockdown restrictions, and the Province understands this to be the case.

Staff, apart from Geoff Bockett, were put on furlough from March and advantage taken of the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which initially covered 80% of staff salaries plus employer's NI and Pension contributions. The Province confirmed their support for staff being paid 100% of their salaries throughout the period. From August some staff returned under a flexible furlough scheme until the latest lockdown at the beginning of November enforced the decision to close until the spring of 2021. We will continue to take advantage of the flexible scheme which is in place until next March. Other Government funded support has and will be accessed as it becomes available. A grant of £10,000 was received via Northumberland County Council during the first lockdown.

You will appreciate that retreat activity has been severely curtailed. Overall, the centre by the end of this year will have lost over £240,000 in anticipated income from retreats and venue users which is why the support of the Province has been so essential. Whilst income has reduced, there have been savings in expenditure. Nevertheless we anticipate we will be approximately 36% down on surplus for the year.

The office has been busy with cancellations and re-bookings so that bookings for next year look promising depending upon the lifting of restrictions. Those Parishioners who have been able to visit or who follow the information on the centre's web site will know that arrangements are in place to make the centre Covid secure for visitors. For residential retreats numbers are limited to 21 which is 20% of the centre's normal capacity. If this limitation on numbers continues, there will be a continuing reduction in income, which will present a significant challenge. Like everyone else we can only hope and pray for a return to normality.

As always in times of trouble, there are significant acts of kindness. We have been touched by the generosity of retreatants who having cancelled their bookings have nevertheless donated their deposits or on occasion even paid for the full booking. We have also been very touched by the continued and significant generosity of parishioners who have enabled us to do things like replace the cattle grids. We would also like to give special thanks to the Parish for the donation of just over £2,000 being the remaining proceeds of the Villa El Salvador project, which sadly had to be wound up this year.

For those events which were able to take place, retreatants expressed themselves to feel secure and safe and to find comfort from the programme offered whether it was externally presented or part of the centre's own programme.

The Minsteracres retreat team prepared a retreat entitled "Gratitude, Prophecy and Hope" based upon the Passionist Icon and the lives and teachings of the Passionist saints. November marks the beginning of a year of celebrations of the tri-centenary. This retreat could only be delivered once before the second lockdown curtailed activity. However, those who attended found it excellent. It is hoped to make the retreat available on-line as part of an approach which we anticipate will be followed through in coming years.

In August, Fr Jeroen was able to take advantage of the presence of Fr Jenish who took over as Parish Priest and Rector, to take a much-needed sabbatical. Fr Jenish, with Tina and Geoff Bockett have been responsible for "keeping the show on the road". We are grateful to them all and to Pavan and Fr Mark who until recently made up the remainder of the Community in the main house. A recent development is the welcome arrival of Fr Ben Lodge CP to live in the Community and from there pursue his main commitment which is to the Causes of Blessed Dominic and Fr Ignatius Spencer. I am sure Fr Ben will become well known to you all in short order.

The Eco Community in the Walled Garden is developing well. Lya, Michael and Scott have developed a clear Vision and operational plan, have held open days and published their first Newsletter. They also offer help to the retreat activity in the Main House. Lya developed a Pilgrim's Walk around the grounds which can be downloaded from the web site. Michael has joined the Retreat Team and Scott is helping with Marketing. It will be wonderful if we can have a near normal year next year to see how we can develop the Retreat Programme and market it with their help.

Mothers Monica and Regina in the Monastery of Our Lady of Holy Hope are supporting Fr Jenish and the Community, and the Parish will be aware of their work in restoring vestments and altar cloths as well as helping to create the new sacristy in the former art room.

Whilst there has been limited expenditure on works, we have completed the partial resurfacing of the Drive, the installation of the new cattle grids and fencing around North Park. Through a scheme called Flexigraze, we expect the imminent arrival of some sheep and Dexter cattle to graze the land in North Park and keep it in good heart.

Our relationships with Lets Get Growing and Tynedale Horticultural Services continue to flourish. Both organisations had to limit their activities during lockdown but maintained their commitment to the Peace Garden and grounds respectively.

Sadly our outreach programme has been very limited this year. Many of the groups who would have come are in the class of those particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 and some of the volunteers who deliver the programme for us are themselves vulnerable or shielding. I know that Liz Holmes and her team cannot wait for the situation to improve so that they can once again offer the peace and quiet of Minsteracres to the groups they support.

As ever, we have to thank the Parish members who support us by giving both financially and by volunteering in so many ways. We are grateful for each and every contribution. A few years ago we set up a regular giving scheme and if anyone would like details of the scheme, they should approach Geoff.

Claire Morgan, Chair of the Board of Trustees

8. Finance Committee

St Elizabeth, Minsteracres

Annual Financial Report 2020

Income

Very similar to previous year, income from the Social Committee fund raising in 2018/19 covered two years, thus 2019/20 was in line with previous experience.

Expenses

The majority of expenses arise from the charges from the Passionists for the use of facilities and administration as shown. Special collections and the reimbursement to the charities do not always happen in the same year, hence this timing problem sometimes shows a mismatch.

Now that the Heavenfield Partnership is set up St Elizabeth`s has to cover its share of the cost (£884). Last year the cost included the cost of setting up the Deanery Youth Ministry

Richard Bridges

Chairman – Finance Committee

26th October 2020

St ELIZABETHS, MINSTERACRES

ANNUAL COMPARISONS

	2018/2019		2019/2020	
	TOTAL		TOTAL	
<u>INCOME</u>				
Gift Aid	20415		20965	
Other	8495		8274	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	28910		29239	
Special Collections	2804		2676	
Newspapers	91		0	
Candles	1053		622	
Fund Raising Healey/Slaely Wander				
Fund Raising - Social Committee	5663		2868	
Other	1234		137	
Interest	9		0	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	39764		35542	
Tax Refund - Gift Aid	3744		3915	
Tax Refund - GASDS	1820		1820	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	5564		5735	
TOTAL INCOME	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	45328		41277	
<u>COSTS</u>				
	Paid to Retreat Centre		Paid to Retreat Cent	
Church Requisites	153		269	
Repairs & Renewals	1369		1890	
Housekeeping	6174		6264	
Heat & Light	2354		2304	
Clergy Allowance	8152		8304	
Clergy Car Allowance	2046		2076	
Insurance	1366		1380	
General Administration	1372		1380	
Special Collections	2651		3116	
Newspapers	130		0	
Diocesan Levy	4542		4739	
Heavenfield Partnership	2321		884	
Other	1385		383	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	34015		32989	
	22250		22500	
SURPLUS	11313		8288	
Opening Balances	52467		63780	
Closing Balances	63780		72068	
<u>Represented by :-</u>				
Current Account	17849		20402	
Tracker Account	0		0	
Deposit with Diocese	45931		51666	
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	63780		72068	

9. Social Committee

Social Committee Treasurer's summary November 2019 to November 2020

	Income	Outlay	Profits	Other info
St. Elizabeth Parish Breakfast, November 2019	donation in kind from SOCO members	£23.96	£23.96	Large Roses Table linen. Pastries
Christmas Fayre, December 2019				
Grand Draw ***	£1013	£76 *	£937	*Ticket printing
Café and Stalls	£887.50	£250	£637.50	
Total			£1574.50	
Burns Night, January 2020				
Tickets	£760	£321.14*	£439.06	Themed napkins, spirit Optic Ceilidh Band, Piper, Food
Bar and Bar stocks **Much unused. So not true record of bar profits.	£241.60	£189.59*	£52.01**	*Wines, Ales, Whisky, soft drinks - stocks carried over
Total Profit			£491.07	

*** **Grand Draw:** As you know we were unable to have a summer fayre draw in 2020 because the Fayre itself was cancelled. We usually raise several thousands from the summer draw. Ticket books are posted across the country: to Yorkshire, Liverpool, London etc. They are advertised on website and all volunteers get a tranche of books. This year the Christmas Fayre Draw took its place. The only tickets sold were to people attending the Fayre, limited to parishioners from the two Masses (the Fayre was not open to the public). This stunning sum of money in a couple of hours reflects the remarkable generosity of churchgoers here.

Only two events were held before the pandemic made social gatherings a risk. A total of £2065.57 was raised.

Camille Mazarelo, Treasurer Social Committee

INCOME and EXPENDITURE
REPORT

All figures £sterling

	Income	Costs	Profit	
Passover	260.00	130.00	130.00	
Indian Night	1114.60	200.99	913.61	
Book Day	1597.00	0.00	1597.00	
Christmas Draw	1003.00	0.00	1003.00	
Christmas Fayre	887.50	210.00	677.50	
Burns Night	981.80	321.44	660.36	
Other	14.50		14.50	
contra	526.00	526.00	0.00	
TOTAL	6384.40	1388.43	4995.97	
Transferred to Parish Account			2868.87	
Donation to Passionists Retreat Centre			2650.00	
Donation to Villa el Salvador			70.00	
Beverages purchased			298.59	
St Elizabeth Feast			23.96	
Other			40.00	
			<u>5951.42</u>	
NET DECREASE in FUNDS in YEAR			-955.45	
Opening Funds				
Bank			1055.36	
Cash			449.90	
			<u>1505.26</u>	
Funds carried forward			549.81	
Balance at Bank			<u>549.81</u>	

Checked and balanced to Bank Statements

R E S BRIDGES