

St Teresa of Lisieux Aspley,
St Hugh of Lincoln Bilborough,
St Thomas More Wollaton.

“Towards our Shared Future”

Missionary Outreach for our New Parish



Introduction

Having considered and reflected on the future status and viability of the parishes of St Teresa, St Hugh and St Thomas More, the Working Party unanimously concluded that the way forward for our group of parishes, is to create one new parish with three places of worship. The proposal was put before Bishop Patrick who was content for it to be further considered, but he asked the WP to consider how the new merged parish would better fulfil its role of mission and outreach as one parish, as opposed to remaining as separate ones?

This document sets out the potential at hand in the new parish and proposes some ways in which this potential can be harnessed and actioned to make such a vision a reality.

Structure

The name of the new Parish

The new name will be decided in accordance with Canon Law following a due process of research amongst the parishioners. The new parish will operate as a unitary parish with three places of worship being: St Teresa of Lisieux, Aspley as the nominated Parish Church, with St Hugh of Lincoln, Bilborough and St Thomas More Wollaton as Sister Churches. It is anticipated that Sunday and weekday masses will be celebrated in each Church as well as other sacramental liturgies such as services of reconciliation with individual Confession, baptisms and funerals and non sacramental liturgies ie exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, Stations of the cross, Lent and Advent Scripture liturgies.

Easter

The celebration of the Easter Triduum will take place in the parish Church as a sign of unity but will include elements of liturgical participation from all three Churches. Easter Sunday Mass will be celebrated in each Church.

Parish Boundaries



The internal parish boundaries will be removed thereby creating one new parish. The intention will be to generate a mindset in which parishioners take ownership of the new parish. The logo of the roundel chosen as representative of the new parish, exemplifies the

Trinitarian concept of *perichoresis*¹ in which the constant flow or exchange of love within the Trinity is perpetually experienced between the three persons whilst at the same time remaining one undivided unity.

We hope, by reference to this idea, to instil into the minds of our parishioners that by belonging to the new parish structure, they can be at ease within all of our places of worship. The retention of each named Church on the logo implies that they are not losing anything of what they already possess, but rather they are gaining something greater. A new sense of connection, which builds up a deeper understanding of fellowship, of reciprocal love and of grace for their benefit, and the benefit of all in our community. This logo will be used on all parish documents and note paper as well as being prominently displayed within our Church buildings.

All the formal structures of the parish will be as laid out by Canon Law, with a properly constituted Finance Committee and Pastoral Council. These bodies will be made up of parishioners drawn from each Church, to bring balance and mutual awareness of need.

The Administrative Assistant (AA).

This position has already been established and is currently in place working from an office in the presbytery at St Teresa's. The AA provides Admin support across each parish, serving the needs of the three Churches, ensuring a tighter oversight of needs and resources, as well as looking to make economies of scale at the same time.

Finance

The new parish will have a single bank account into which the Sunday Offerings, donations and Standing Orders from parishioners along with stipends from the three Churches will be paid. The allocation of funding between the Churches will be settled in accordance with the rules and regulations as set out in the Parish Administrative Manual.

Team Ministry

The previous Team Ministry of two priests and one deacon has now been overtaken by circumstances and no longer exists. The configuration of Clergy for the new parish is one priest and one deacon working together, with potential ad hoc priestly assistance as necessary.

Challenges

¹ a theological term which describes the necessary being-in-one-another of the three divine Persons of the Trinity because of the single divine essence, the eternal procession of the Son from the Father and of the Spirit.

The major challenge will be to encourage parishioners to engage with all the parish places of worship and centres. Over the past 5 years of the Team Ministry, such engagement has been hard to achieve. Joint activities across the three, encompassing both liturgical and social events, have had limited success. Indeed some parishioners have never visited their neighbouring parish at all, in spite of heartfelt requests by Clergy for them to support such occasions. It is hoped that a greater level of interaction can be facilitated by consultation with parishioners from each Church to for example

- Consider basing some sacramental preparation such as the baptism preparation course at a Sister Church/Centre ie St Thomas More Parish Centre
- Celebrate an evening mass during the week at a Sister Church thus encouraging parishioners at work during the day, to attend a weekday mass.
- Encourage external facing talks on the faith, with guest speakers, open to the wider community to be held at Sister Church/Centres to encourage attendance from across the former parish areas.
- Encourage external facing charitable events, eg McMillan Coffee Morning, Dementia Awareness Fundraiser and others to be offered by all three centres at different times.

With these and other initiatives we hope to provide opportunities for coming together in a spirit of sharing and of community building.

The Pastoral Vision and its implementation

We come now to the matters which necessitate the greatest amount of generosity and support from all involved, if this opportunity to re-set and change our outlook is to bear fruit.

The number of Catholics in our three parishes is unknown. However from a projection of the numbers attending mass - currently about 400, the possibility is of a potential catholic population within the overall area of the parish of about 2,500. Both schools (St Teresa Primary and Trinity Secondary in the parish), have a full compliment of baptised children attending them. The picture this paints is one in which the vast majority of Catholics in the parish are currently not regularly attending mass in our Churches.

We feel that our outreach and missionary programme, without neglecting the wants and needs of the wider society around us, should initially commence with *searching for the lost sheep and carrying them home*. The aim is to put into motion opportunities and possibilities for this reality to be addressed and reversed, by supporting and encouraging the parishioners who are attending mass, to become more active and energised in their engagement with their faith.

Some of the ways by which we can begin to do this are set out below. They are not exhaustive but rather indicative of what is possible.

At the heart of the parish is the celebration of the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian Life². Our role as missionary disciples, takes its departure from and develops out of this reality. We must look therefore to the reception the Eucharist as the food that sustains us and nurtures us as we take up the challenges of bringing the Gospel and the message of salvation, through our encounter with the living Lord, to all whom we meet, as real and life enhancing.

1. Justice and Peace Group & Caritas

We recognise the importance of Caritas and the charitable works of mercy as central to our calling. We feel that a strong commitment to the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching are elemental to our task. A number of parishioners have already attended the *Here, Now, Us* workshop which took place at St Thomas More Parish Centre on the 27 November. This event highlighted the concept of “Common Good Thinking” through our social interaction. This concept forms the foundation of our missionary and outreach work, as we seek to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the sick and those in prison. Every parish action and activity is bound to this concept, which can never be overlooked. It will remain the vital inspiration in what will feature at the heart of the parish.

2. To Create a parish outreach ministry team under the patronage of St Barnabas³.

We will identify a group of committed parishioners and appoint them as “outreachers” who will take on the role of making contact with parishioners whom we know have stopped attending mass. Their role will be to offer an opportunity to re-engage and encourage them to voice their reasons why they have walked away. This can be done initially by offering meetings within a friendly social setting and creating an atmosphere of support and understanding. For example family picnics during the summer could be organised in which parishioners are invited to bring along a friend who has lapsed.

3. Ministry to the families of the newly received/baptised under the patronage of the Holy Family

We have a good number of catechists in the parish who could form a ministry of outreach to the newly received/baptised. A number of families who bring their children and babies for baptism/first holy communion/confirmation/ drift away from the Church after the ceremony. This is also the case with the newly received who have come through the RCIA course. We should offer to all of these families an opportunity to come together to

² *Lumen Gentium Vatican II*

³ *Barnabas is a name which means “Son of Encouragement”*

chat and discuss their hopes and expectations as well as their difficulties and problems so that their issues can be tackled and better understood.

4. Ministry to Young Adults

We have a large Primary and Secondary School within the parish, and we are blessed that a good number of children and young adults attend mass. However we must engage more meaningfully with them and allow them to become more involved and active in our three Church parish community. Nevertheless there remains a large cohort of children and young adults who do not attend mass. To address this, we aim to begin a “School to Parish and Beyond” liaison ministry that strengthens the Schools and Parish connection so that it is deepened to ensure that the presence of our Schools within the parish is made more visible and dynamic.

5. Ministry to the Bereaved

We already have begun a ministry to the bereaved, supporting those struggling with loss. Bereaved families may well have members who are themselves lapsed or have no connection with faith. At these moments of loss, an opportunity can arise to light a spark within, that brings out questions for further exploration. We are offering bereavement support to the wider community, people of all faiths and none, advertising at a County level. Sessions are run currently by attendees at St Thomas More and St Hugh’s and are held at the St Thomas More Parish Centre.

6. “Open Connection” Coffee Mornings

The importance of offering social events and activities within the parish, which reach out to others beyond our community, is an important part of our outreach programme. Establishing a vibrant Social Committee to organise events through the year, ie bazaars, cream teas, lunch clubs, friendship groups and the like, as well as offering opportunities for fund raising and social interaction, also enables others from outside the Catholic community to become part of what we are about. Open connection Coffee events have commenced at all three parish centres.

7. The use of Multi-Media and other methods as a means of contact and information

To re-set the parish website so that it becomes more user friendly, advertising what we have to offer. Giving opportunities for feed back and suggestions, engaging more openly with the world around us, but expressing the values of the gospel as we do so. Contacting all on our parish registers, so as to re-engage the elderly and those who find technology off-putting by means of telephone and post.

Summary

Merging to create one parish is the agreed way forward. Set out above are some of the initiatives which have already been put in place and others ongoing which we see as central to the task of being missionary disciples. Each one of the above will require a level of commitment and generosity by all. Also the provision of resource and training to enable it to bear fruit will be necessary.

We feel that as separate parishes, the resources of St Teresa, St Hugh and St Thomas More on their own, are too thinly spread. When pooled together, the provision of willing people becomes a deeper reservoir from which to discover committed volunteers, who will when properly trained will be well prepared for the task ahead.

We recommend this document as a first step. We propose to give every parishioner the opportunity to have their say and to enable us to decide on the best way forward, basing decisions on facts and responses received.

With deep thanks for your guidance in this matter and for allowing us to pursue this pathway.

Yours in Christ

Fr Stanley & Deacon Anthony

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