

## FINANCE COMMITTEE'S CHAIRMAN REPORT

### FOR THE 2017 PARISH COUNCIL AGM

#### INTRODUCTION

Chairman, Father Michael, fellow parishioners, I thank you for giving up your Sunday afternoon to show your interest in your parish affairs. I thank you all for your continuing financial support, without which we would not be able to boast such a wonderful home for our fellow Catholics and such an active, outreaching community that our parish has become well-known for.

It gives me untold pleasure to be able to tell you that, for the first time, since I took on this responsibility, over seven years ago, I won't be begging for more funding, at least not to pay for our running costs.

Unlike last year, when I reported yet another deficit of over £14,000 pounds, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, 2017 we had a surplus of £13,506 pounds. At last, on average each week our income was £260 greater than our expenditure, but, what is even more pleasing is the fact that this trend has continued so far this year. I trust that it will now continue to the end of our financial year, so that we can begin to rebuild our reserves. A parish like ours should always have a healthy "rainy-day" reserve because we can never predict what emergencies may hit us.

This change in our financial fortunes has come about since our publication and parish-wide distribution of "Supporting your Parish" which, not only appealed to parishioners to review their contributions to their Church annually, but showed why the money is needed.

I am very grateful to all those who responded so generously to our appeal but, once again, I have to thank our army of hard-working volunteers, who donate so much of their time and save the parish untold amounts of money.

Every time we have a parish-wide distribution, such as "Supporting Your Parish", Christmas and Easter cards, letters with raffle ticket books, an army of so-called "envelope-stuffers" gathers in the 1<sup>st</sup> Committee Room to prepare the 1,100 or so envelopes containing all the information we need to send out. This exercise saves our parish over £700 in postage charges alone.

Can you imagine how much we would have to pay a cleaning company if we didn't have our volunteer cleaners? How about the beautiful flower arrangements? How much money do our flower ladies save us?

Our parish is indeed blessed, having such a large, talented and willing army of volunteers and we thank God for them all. Let us pray that He will continue to inspire many others, particularly the younger members of our parish, to donate their talents and a little of their time to St Joseph's.

I am very grateful to our many tax-payers who gift-aid their donations. At no extra cost to them, their donations added an extra £29,654 to our income. As there still may be some who, for whatever reason, have not given us their consent to claim back the tax on the money they have donated, our efforts to encourage all tax payers to Gift Aid their donations are on-going.

**The Furniture Market** again, made a valuable contribution of £15,500 towards our running costs and donated an equal amount to many other good causes in and around the parish. Another good example of how St Joseph's reaches out.

**Celia Tobin and Christine Gosling, organised and ran Parish Day** for the second year. Not only is this a valuable fund-raising event, but, more important, it provides a wonderful opportunity for our parishioners to meet up and enjoy a few hours of relaxation, entertainment, gossip and real community spirit.

**Parish Day and the 200 Club** are the two major survivors of our previous “Events” and, whilst some events were organised and run on a one-off basis by a few willing volunteers, income from Events is significantly down.

We are in desperate need to re-organise the way we run Events and Celia and Christine have provided us with a model that seems to work well. Rather than ask one individual to organise and manage all events, it makes more sense for us to list out the events we wish to run each year and then find volunteers to organise and run each one.

We will still need an **Events Leader or Co-ordinator**, able to co-ordinate events and find and organise volunteers to run each one.

I’m sure that Father Michael would love to hear from anyone interested in this role or alternatively any suggestions from parishioners on how to restore this valuable activity. It is important to remember that other than raising funds, these social events make a valuable contribution in fostering a strong community spirit.

The 200 Club was re-launched during the year and provided an income of £5,040, which was shared 50/50 between the parish and the prize winners. At the year-end there were 101 parishioners competing for the monthly draw. It is our ambition to encourage at least another 99 members so that we can truly call it the “200 Club.” Parishioners can join at any time and their number will be included in the draw the following month.

In summary, at the end of the financial year our income, excluding legacies, donations and Together-in-Faith, amounted to £264,890 and our expenditure came to £251,384, giving us a surplus of £13,506. The full accounts, which were independently audited last July, can be seen at the end of the financial report.

The Diocese made the final retention payment of £19,583.34 for the refurbishment bringing the total cost of this project to £1,118,505.05. There are still outstanding matters on our “Snagging List” which we are pressing the Diocese to resolve but, in the main, most parishioners seem to be satisfied with the end results.

Our unending gratitude must go to the late Nancy Deeves and Harry Hancock, whose generous legacies provided the major part of the money for the refurbishment. I have asked Father Michael to consider an appropriate and permanent acknowledgement for their generosity. May the Good Lord reward them in Heaven and may they both be resting in peace.

The details of the refurbishment accounts are held in Northampton.

Whilst the most important work has now been completed, there are still outstanding issues to be considered. The main ones and I must stress, not in any order of priority, are the following:

- **The New Entrance for the less able**, for which orders for the doors and relevant equipment were placed some time ago and we await delivery. As soon as these materialise we will carry out the necessary alterations. Before we can modify the car park however, we will need planning consent and raise the funds needed for the work.

- The beautiful and historical **Chantry Chapel and Our Lady's Altar** were deemed to need specialist attention, hence the reason why this area was excluded from the main refurbishment. We have had a comprehensive survey carried out on the area by Lincoln College and we await their report with recommendations of what restoration work needs to be considered.
- As you will be aware, **the Cemetery** will benefit from a little tender, loving care. Last Easter we published in our newsletter an idea of what could be done, inviting parishioners to comment on the concept we put forward. Most of the comments we received were very much in favour of the proposals and, currently we wait to agree and finalise the specification of the work to be done, before we ask for Diocese permission to proceed.
- There are no facilities for the less able at **The Holy Name in Denham**. We must give this careful consideration as soon as possible. The Church would also benefit from the addition of another room or covered area with some meeting facilities.
- After much thought, Fathers Michael, Martin and Maurice made the decision to refurbish **The Parish Centre and Hall** rather than re-built it. Currently we are working on an "End Plan" of what the parish needs are and, having already consulted with regular users we will produce some conceptual ideas and carry out another parish-wide consultation, as with the Cemetery. We need to make sure that the "End Plan" will serve the real needs of the parish. The refurbishment can be done in stages, with priority being given to facilities for the less able. In order to avoid wasting money, whatever work is planned, must always coincide with the "End Plan".

I must point out that, whatever the wishes of parishioners; we cannot proceed with any developments or major projects without the consent of the Diocese. I have proposed therefore that in future we follow these steps:

1. Establish the needs or wishes of the Parish.
2. Estimate the likely costs.
3. Organise fund-raising for the work to be done.
4. Apply for planning consent, if needed.
5. When funds are available obtain Diocese approval for the project.
6. Once Diocese Trustees approval is granted we can proceed with the project.

### **Grateful Thanks**

Chairman, Father Michael, Parishioners, I cannot end without a few words of thanks.

First and foremost, I must thank all the members of my team; you included Mr Chairman, who have given me untold amount of time and support over the past seven years.

My thanks also go to Fathers Michael, Bob and Maurice and not forgetting Fathers Martin, John and Tony who have always made themselves available for their advice and spiritual guidance.

My two fellow Parishioners, Margaret Harwood and Charles Whitehead, who have helped me to understand and cope with the complexities of Diocese procedures and have always been there to guide and support me.

And how could I have managed without the help, support, patience and welcome cups of tea from Joan Barham, Helena Sullivan and Karen Peters.

My thanks go to you all.

Dear friends, I have served over 7 years in this very busy and, at times, complicated and frustrating position. But the satisfaction that I have had in serving our Church and our God, has made it all well worth my while.

The time has now come for me to hand over to a younger and more energetic individual. I have asked Father Michael therefore to find and appoint a replacement, to take over my responsibilities and to help and advise him to lead our Church and parish onwards and upwards.

It has been a great privilege for me to work with so many wonderful people and to be able to have given some of my time to our lovely Church. I thank God for each and every one of you and ask for His blessings on us all.

***John Forte*** – *Chairman of the Finance Committee*

*October 2017*