Parish Annual General Meeting 2025/26

Senior Leadership Team Report presented by Lizzie Quinn.

Many of you are deeply familiar with the concept of our parishes' Senior Leadership Team.

As opening context for anyone who may be less familiar with the SLT:

The Senior Leadership team was first created by Father Shaun in 2018. Inspired by the recommendations of Divine Renovation, this group – comprising of the parish priest, assistant priest, and lay representatives from each of the three parishes of Our Lady's, St John Fisher and St John the Evangelist – was set up to support the Parish Priest in any decisions that are being made about our parish mission.

Lay members are identified and invited to join the SLT by the parish priest. As a combined group, we meet on a monthly basis, reflecting both on what has taken place in the previous month, and looking ahead at the strategic planning of the parishes to ensure that all we are doing reflects the principles of our Parish Vision Statement.

We do this by:

- Acting as a sounding board for the parish priest and assistant priest
- Providing constructive feedback on proposals under discussion
- Assisting with the implementation of new ideas proposed by the JPPC
- Identifying and implementing additional initiatives

We also represent the three parishes at joint parish and diocesan events. In February this year, current and previous members of the SLT had the privilege of attending the Solemn Vespers and Mass of Installation for Archbishop Richard Moth, both celebrated at Westminster Cathedral. Closer to home, SLT members read at the Christmas Carol service (at St John the Evangelist) and led the Good Friday Stations of the Cross (at Our Lady's).

In autumn 2025, the SLT embarked on a series of sessions supported by 2 coaches from Diving Renovation entitled 'Missional Prayer', where we hoped to refocus our attention onto the power of prayer in the parishes. From this emerged two initiatives you will have seen in the past year.

Firstly, we invited everyone to join us in Lent 2026 for Forty Hours Devotion with the Blessed Sacrament being exposed for prayer across the three parishes, including over two nights. Different groups and individuals led prayers at different parts of the Forty Hours, including St John's School and our GIFT families.

Secondly, we invited inputs from across our parish members and ministries, and used these to create a parish prayer, to ask God to guide and empower us in our parish mission. This is now being prayed publicly at Mass and at parish meetings, and we hope also privately at home.

Since September 2024, the members of the Senior Leadership team have taken on particular responsibility for specific aspects of our parish mission, namely:

- Father Dom – Liturgy
- Francis Holly – Discipleship (appointed September 2025)
- Jo Rodrigues – Faith in Action (appointed February 2025)
- Lizzie Quinn – Youth & Families (appointed October 2024)
- Richard Booth – Evangelisation (appointed April 2024)

Our role here is to support Father Andrew in co-ordinating the different ministries, volunteers, groups and events that naturally fall into these categories.

I would like to take a few minutes to share more details with you all on each of these areas, and what has been done since our last Annual General Meeting took place.

EVANGELISATION

In September 2025 we started a new season of Alpha, with around 12 guests and a great team to guide them led by Deidre Gilmour and Richard Booth. Over the 12 weeks some strong friendships were formed as the group grew in their faith together, and one of the guests entered the journey to full reception into the Catholic Church.

As Father Andrew has already mentioned, one of the founding and key members of the Alpha team was Mike Eaton, who sadly died in March 2026. In light of this, and other team members needing a break after many years of continued service in running Alpha, it has been decided to have a year off Alpha in the coming year. Our plan is to have a renewed team lead our next Alpha season in autumn 2027, which will also give time to reflect and receive training on new Alpha resources that are being launched early in 2027.

Another form of Evangelisation that has developed over the last 18 months has been our Faith Stall at the Rickmansworth monthly market, which has given us the opportunity to be present in the heart of our town, and increase awareness in our wider local community of what is happening in our parishes. This inspired a similar stall at the Chorleywood Village Fair in July 2026, which really raised awareness of St John Fisher in the village.

We have also continued to welcome those who wish to become Catholic through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) programme. In 2025 we had 8 people receive the Sacraments through RCIA and in 2026 we had 11. We continue to use Dr Edward Sri's Symbolon Course, which gives detailed inputs on the different elements of our faith to reflect on. Evidence of the fruits of this course – and the efforts of our RCIA volunteers – is shown by those who have been received over the past two years, all continuing to come to Mass regularly and becoming part of our parish community.

DISCIPLESHIP

There are a number of different opportunities for parishioners to grow in their discipleship through formation and catechesis in our parishes. These opportunities change over time, reflecting the different needs of our parish community.

The Prayer and Life Workshops continue to be run, providing an opportunity for parishioners to grow in their prayer and relationship with Jesus Christ over a period of 15 weeks.

The Faith and Friendship group also continues to meet every two weeks on Wednesday afternoons at Our Lady's. This group is particularly aimed at the senior members of our parishes, and is a time of input, reflection and prayer supported by a cup of tea. This group is open to all those who wish to meet new people and reflect on different elements of our faith.

In May 2025, we began a new group on Friday evenings at Our Lady's, who gather together to watch an episode of The Chosen and then discuss the episode together. Over the past year, this group have watched the first two seasons together, and after a break for the summer have just started watching season 3.

In summer 2025 it was decided that it was time to end our monthly Kairos online, as the numbers were getting lower, and other opportunities for formation were being offered. Our thanks to Anne Lorrimer Roberts and Paul Forrest who ran this group for 5 years, which fed people when they most needed it!

In January 2026 Father Dom began a course on Salvation History for parishioners on Sunday evenings at Our Lady's. Over the course of 10 sessions, each held on a Sunday evening after 6pm Mass, Father Dom opened up many parts of the Old Testament showing how they all link to our salvation story. Around 40-60 people attended each session, including several people from other parishes who had heard of it through word of mouth.

In the summer of 2026 a Christian Meditation Course was held at Our Lady's, and this proved to be very helpful to some in discovering a new form of prayer in our tradition – so much so that the group have continued to meet beyond the original 6 weeks of the course.

Since our last AGM, we have also seen the introduction of three new groups across the parishes.

The Catholic Women's League have been reintroduced, led by the National President Siobhan Garibaldi, who has links to our parishes. The group meets once a month on Tuesday evenings, for a time of fellowship, reflection and activities usually seeking to help a charity that has been nominated by members.

The Young Adults Group has also grown, offering monthly activities and socialising, and providing a great chance for those aged 18-35ish to meet up and talk about their faith and many other things. There are now how have around 20 individuals signed up to this, with around 10 meeting regularly. Our thanks to Ben and Sabrina who are so dedicated in co-ordinating this group.

And most recently we have seen the formation of the Men's Group, a monthly meeting for men of any age to talk about an aspect of faith and support one another in their faith journey. So far talks have included 'What does it mean to be a man?' and 'Faith in football'. It is a great chance for men from different backgrounds and parishes to meet each other and be open about their faith and how it plays a part in their lives.

FAITH IN ACTION

Over many years, one of the strongest examples of Faith in Action has been the wonderful work of our St Vincent de Paul team (SVP), which we will hear about later in this meeting. I want to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in the SVP for the vital work they do in our community, including organising our 'Community Lunch' and 'Warm Spaces' initiatives. New members are always welcome and needed, so please do think about signing up to join this team if you can.

The twice-yearly "CAFOD run" during Lent and just after Christmas is now becoming a fixture of our parish calendar, with both funds and awareness being raised for the incredible work that CAFOD do around the world.

We have also started a new initiative in March 2026. Using a programme created by Caritas Westminster called 'Love in Action', each month we have been exploring a different principle of Catholic Social Teaching through the newsletter, handouts, homilies and banners. These have then been followed up by a meeting on a Thursday evening with different speakers relevant to the monthly principle. This series will end in November with three meetings that will reflect on where there may be opportunities in our parishes to do more to live up to these principles.

YOUTH & FAMILIES

One key aim of the parish SLT and JPPC is for us to create a seamless journey of Youth Ministry where our young people have an opportunity to encounter Christ from childhood through to young adulthood.

This begins with those children who are brought to the parish for Baptism by their families. Father Dom now visits all those who apply for baptism in our parish, a positive personal connection with each family, which is reflected in their attendance at Mass both before and after the Baptism. We thank the team who support Fr Dom in the Baptism Preparation Class for their enthusiasm in journeying with our parents at this important moment of their child's formation.

A central part of our ministry to our families is our GIFT family catechesis, which provides families of primary school-aged children with a way to "grow in faith together". GIFT includes monthly family sessions, parent sessions and a visit from Fr Andrew to the family home to talk about living the faith.

When parents and Father Andrew agree that a child is ready, they are assigned a GIFT catechist mentor who supports the entire family as the child prepares for the Sacraments of

Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. More and more, we are finding that GIFT families feel they really belong to the parish and are part of a larger family where they can find support and a spiritual home beyond the scope of sacramental preparation. Continuing what Father Andrew has shared in previous AGMs, this past year we have had several parents have become involved in different aspects of parish life – including participating in faith groups and volunteering. Children are also participating in parish life more deeply, becoming readers, choir members and altar servers. GIFT is helping many of our families to "grow together in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ", which is one of the core tenets of our parish vision statement.

Whether from our GIFT families or beyond, it's been wonderful to see so many young people taking part in different ministries in the parishes. We now have around 30 Altar Servers, 13 children in the Youth Choir, and a number of young readers, Children's Liturgy assistants and welcomers, all under the age of 18 playing their part.

In Mill End we have Children's Liturgy at our 10.30am Mass three times a month, and we have an increasing number of children attending this regularly. This has been led for the past 15 years by Liz Townsend, who will be stepping down from the role in January. On behalf of Father Andrew, Father Dom and everyone across our parishes, I want to thank Liz for her long-standing commitment and co-ordination of this group.

In summer 2025, our Youth Choir Director, Jaison, resigned. Jaison's departure led to several members of the choir also leaving, and with the future of the choir uncertain, Father Andrew generously offered to lead the choir for a one-term period. A year later – definitely longer than planned! – thanks to Father Andrew's efforts we now have a flourishing Youth Choir and have recently appointed Roseanna Dunn, who begins her role as Youth Choir Director this week. We are sure she will be a great success and the choir will be in good hands over the coming years.

Our parish Youth Group is for those in secondary school, and has been lead for many years by Toni, Belinda and Margaret. Over the past six months, these leaders have had several meetings with members of the SLT to reflect on the sessions, with a particular view to identifying new volunteers. Following several people offering their support through our skills audit in May, we have decided to move the Youth Group to Sunday afternoons from 4pm each month, where we believe more young people will come, and we can have an increased pool of volunteers. We have six new helpers including three young adults willing to help with this new group, and we hope to begin a process of peer ministry, which we believe will be provide an increased engagement from our young people of all ages over the coming years. I want to take this opportunity to thank Margaret, Belinda and Toni for their many years of dedicated commitment and support of this group.

Father Dom continues to lead our Confirmation Groups with the assistance of a team catechists, for those in year 9. Over the past two years the Catechists have grown in confidence to lead the sessions guided by Fr Dom.

One of the challenges of Youth Ministry is how to engage with our young people after they are confirmed, particularly in the ages of 15-18. Our local school academy ASCAT, led by

Deacon Liam Lynch, have recognised this and in the past year set up a ‘post-Confirmation Discipleship’ journey for those young people wishing to take their faith seriously. Father Dom and Father Andrew are providing referrals to those they think would benefit from this group following their Confirmation. We hope as this grows our parishes will begin to see more and more young people continuing to grow in their relationship with Christ at this challenging time of life.

Over the summer, the SLT met to consider all the different groups we have, how they support our parish vision statement and mission, and what opportunities we might have for further initiatives. We have shared the outputs of this workshop with the JPPC and will also continue to work further on our discussions in the coming months.

One of the ways we’re doing this is by meeting again with our Divine Renovation coaches over the next four weeks, this time with a specific focus on Evangelisation. We ask you all to pray for us as we embark on this new chapter of our journey together, and we look forward to sharing the fruits of this new module with all of you.