

St Bart's Together

No. 3 – July 2022

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10.30 Jubilee Mass, Sunday 29 May 2022

St Bartholomew RC Church, 47 Vesta Avenue, St Albans, Herts AL1 2PE

01727 850066

stalbanssouth@rcdow.org.uk | Facebook: @StBartsRCChurch

From the Editor

Do keep this issue as a memento of a special time for us at St Bart's, With two Jubilees, our own and the Queen's a week apart, it's been a hectic time.

Father Francis and Christine Lambert (Chair Parish Pastoral Council) write their thanks to you all for your participation in the Jubilee.

A selection of photos from our website will remind us of our Jubilee events: Saturday walk and Youth Mass and party, Sunday Procession, Mass and party in St Adrian's School, and the Exhibition with an appreciation by Carole Cooper.

We pay tribute and say goodbye to both our deacons and include two spiritual pieces from Justin to challenge us.

We feature two notable examples of how our Church has engaged with **ecumenical action**:

- The Community Bank is celebrating its 20th anniversary and Anthony Baker, one of the originators, tells us about this.
- Teresa Clarke informs us about the 140 asylum seekers lodged in the Noke Hotel and the story of how local Christians have taken part in English language conversation classes.

Alban Day (22 June) is a key date in our city and I write about why and how it has been exceptionally well celebrated this year.

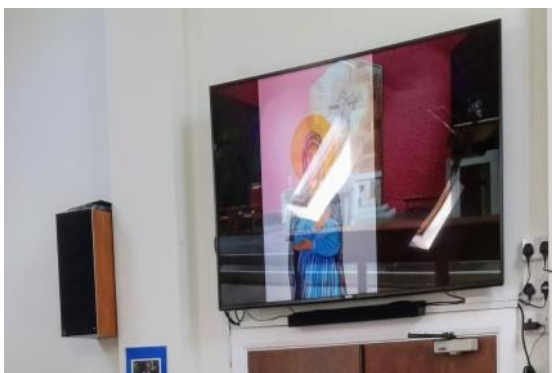
Our **60th Jubilee** was a time for looking back but its legacy will be with us both in the beautiful improvements in the Lady Chapel and the exciting educational and communication possibilities offered by the new screen in the Hall.

With thanks to all the contributors and Nick Clarke.

Peter Godwin



The Marian Chapel today



The new screen in the Hall

Dear Parishioners and Friends

Thanks to your generosity, participation and volunteering, as well as some help from the weather, our 60th Anniversary weekend was a joyous event all round and has created some wonderful memories.

The Saturday Mass and Rite of Election for the Confirmation Group was a special event with Deacon Paul.

On Sunday as well as Bishop Paul, it was wonderful to see Canon Robert Plourde, Fr David Williamson, Sister Margaret and Fr Michael O'Boy among us as well as several well-known previous parishioners and from St Adrian's.

We recognise that many were not able to be there for a range of reasons. On Sunday some 19 of our housebound received an afternoon tea with some anniversary cake and the Mass service booklet – all prepared and delivered by our own parishioners.

The feedback on the refurbished Marian Chapel is that it is stunning and really adds to our Church and our smart TV screen has been used for groups at least three times already in the last couple of weeks.

The photos are on the website and a shorter photomontage is underway and will be shared on our new TV soon.

The music and flowers complemented every aspect beautifully and we are blessed to have so many talents. In summary, we have many parishioners and their families to thank for enabling this event – supporting it, getting everything ready, ensuring the day went smoothly and for making sure it was all put away again.

The hospitality of Headteacher Aideen Porter was second to none and our link to St Adrian's School continues to build as we look forward to other joint activities and to **16 October 2022** when we are planning a children's procession and Mass and exhibition in the school. Save that date!

With our thanks to all

Fr Francis and Christine Lambert



Farewell Justin and Paul!

Justin Cross and Paul O'Connor

St Bart's has been doubly blessed with two deacons in recent years, and we are sorry to lose both in the same year. To be a deacon they embarked on a four-year process including three years of study, enabling them to perform priestly sacraments including marriage, baptism and funerals.

JUSTIN From 2007 to 2011 Justin was well known as the Administrator at St Albans Cathedral, overseeing major projects like the installation of the new peal of 13 bells. Cathedral work tied in well with his lifelong interest and commitment to ecumenism. He has acted as an Abbey ecumenical chaplain assisting Father Brian Reynolds from 2014, in particular at the regular Friday Masses. Justin and his wife Xanthe were parishioners at St Bart's in the late 1990s, both singing in the choir. Since then his children Lauren and Thomas have both served on the altar and he became a deacon in 2014. The enrichment of the liturgy through his sermons and his training of the laity has been invaluable.

PAUL has been part of the parish since the early 1990s, always active in encouraging its growth. His great communication skills are no doubt connected to his work as an English teacher. With his wife Lucy his work with young people in the parish and establishment of a youth club has been particularly appreciated. Since he became a deacon in 2020 his youth work has continued, particularly in preparing confirmation candidates.

The contribution of both deacons has been critical to the spiritual development of our parish, and we thank them and their families and wish them every success in their new homes.

Extract from Deacon Justin's homily from the Feast of Pentecost 2022

As 'witnesses of the Resurrection' our sole purpose is the salvation of souls. This is the fundamental point of every single one of Jesus' parables, every single healing, every single instruction to the disciples. This is the purpose of the Sacraments; the purpose of our pastoral care; as well as of our evangelisation, our social outreach, our hospitality: so that we, together, and those we bring to God may enter his kingdom. In any discussion about what our mission is, all too often we lose sight of this essential.

But, how do we do this? Well, thankfully, there are as many answers to this question as there are people chosen by God to be his witnesses in the world.

Remember – as St Paul reminds us – the Church is the Body of Christ. With Christ as the head of the Church, we are his body. Thus, just as the Church is not the Church without Christ, so the Church is not the Church without us; and there are as many different bits of the body, each with our own service to offer, as there are of us.

The salvation of souls then is not just the job of clergy!

To paraphrase St John Henry Newman: each of us has a definite service to perform. A service that has been entrusted by God to me alone, to you alone, and to no other person.

So, what is yours? This is the really challenging bit, of course! What is your service in his Church? How are you saving souls?

I invite, encourage, urge you to reflect on your own wonderful gifts, to pray and to respond to God's call. If you've not offered yourself before to help in parish life, maybe now's the time. Speak to members of the Parish Council. Please, please, don't wait to be asked!

Take this Pentecost, enlivened and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, as God's sign to you, as an invitation, especially in our 60th anniversary year, to offer yourself (your very own service, your very own gifts) for the people of this parish and community. The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few.

And, remember, whatever you do, do it in the name of Jesus, do it for the glory of God, because in love of God and neighbour you do it for the salvation of souls.

This is the mission of Jesus and his Church. There is no other!



Deacon Justin

Extract from Deacon Justin's reflections for Liturgical Ministers

I hope the celebration of Holy Mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction this morning was an opportunity for you to enjoy a bit of silence amidst all our busyness, a chance to be close to Our Lord, to pray, to let him into your hearts, to offer him your cares, needs, worries, to adore him and, simply, to say thank you. Please do remember that this is on offer every Saturday morning. Whenever you need such silence, do come.

And even if you think you don't need it. Come anyway!

Spiritual formation is not the preserve of clergy. It is open to anyone and everyone. Not only that, it's essential! Essential to support any kind of service in the Church. We spend a lot of time telling each other about our bodily health. Such sharing, quite rightly, is a great comfort, a great relief, as we share our burden. And it's a wonderful way to support each other. But how often do we talk about our spiritual health – how often do we ask others about theirs? Not easy to do, of course.

St Paul tells us that we are called to the spiritual life, to heavenly things; and talks about running the race. We don't think twice about the notion of good bodily health in order to run a race literally; but, how much thought do we give to maintaining good spiritual health to run the race St Paul speaks of?

In the healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12), Jesus makes it plain, doesn't he? Yes, he can heal bodily ailments. But, that is not his mission. Jesus' mission is to save souls; his mission is our spiritual health.

This is the point of Lent being a journey of conversion, of purification, leading to the transformation of the Resurrection. This is the whole point of the Cross. When we or others face the trials and tribulations of this life, some personal, some more existential, the answer is not self-reliance, to work harder, to become even busier; the answer is not hate, anger, resentment and revenge; the answer is the Cross. It is trust in and gratitude for what Jesus has already done for us all.

It is letting go to let Jesus' merciful love through the Holy Spirit lead us, guide us and work in us. But, we will find it hard to see this if all we pursue is a life of busyness and self-reliance.

We need a spiritual formation to understand this. We need ongoing spiritual formation to feed this, encourage it, nurture it.

So, do we then in recognition of this make the most of the sacraments? We are committed to coming to Mass, which is the most important thing. What about the sacrament of confession and the sacrament of the sick? Thinking of the prodigal son returning to the embrace of his loving father (Luke 15:20-24), who doesn't want this?

Do we spend time with Holy Scripture? I can't encourage this enough. Even if it's just reading the gospel of the day, every day, that will change your life – it will support you, nourish you, console you, challenge you, comfort you. It will help you grow. We will simply know God better and will be a better witness of the Resurrection in our world, because we will be preaching more authentically, and therefore be a better transmitter of God's transformative power.

Remember: Word and Sacrament; prayer and charity. These are the building blocks of a spiritual life. And, the single, most important thing is the celebration of Mass. It truly is the source and summit of our lives; reflected in the prayer said when doing the ablutions after Holy Communion: 'what has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart; that, what we have been given in time, may be our healing for eternity.' Beautiful!



Deacon Paul and his wife Lucy in Westminster Cathedral

St Albans Community Bank

While St Albans seems an affluent area, there are many less well-off who have to borrow for any new project: a car, a new carpet, a modest holiday, a wedding or a funeral. St Albans Community Bank is one of around 240 credit unions in Britain with about 1.4 million members. Credit Unions are 'financial mutuals': members save, and may then borrow other members' savings in order to avoid high cost credit. They are regulated and overseen by Government/the Bank of England.

Our Credit Union started in 2002, encouraged by Churches Together, and is now open to anyone who lives or works in Hertfordshire. Anthony Baker played a leading role from the start and Andy Petch and he both serve on the management board, with Christine Lambert providing HR advice.

We now have about 1350 members and £1.5 million in assets. We have loaned out about £2.8 million, most of which has been/is being repaid. Unpaid debts are always a challenge for credit unions and we seek to be prudent in our lending. For example, there is no point in a member incurring further debt if their living expenses are more than their income, or if they are already too heavily indebted elsewhere. Nevertheless we have made a variety of successful loans, and one quiet satisfaction is to recognise a number of members, previously reliant on borrowing, now building up their savings. As one member remarked "For the first time in my life I have some savings!"

To find out more visit the website: www.stalbanscommunitybank.co.uk or speak to Anthony Baker on 01727 835491.



The screenshot shows the website's header with the logo and navigation menu (ABOUT US, LOANS, SAVINGS, NEWS, CONTACT). The main content area includes a breadcrumb trail (HOME → ABOUT US), the title 'About Us', and a paragraph describing the bank as a not-for-profit, volunteer-led organization. A list of three bullet points outlines the bank's purpose: providing loans and savings, offering an alternative to commercial banks, and supporting members' financial well-being. A quote in a green box states: "It's the local community bank for the St Albans District. Apart from the city, it covers Harpenden, Wheathampstead, London Colney, in fact, the whole of Hertfordshire". Below the quote is a photo of a street scene. At the bottom, there are three call-to-action buttons: 'Call 01727 859135', 'Email us', and 'Request a call back'. A footer note mentions the bank's trading name and a link to the privacy notice.

Conversation groups for asylum seekers

WHAT?

Conversation groups started in February 2022 after some asylum seekers from the Noke Hotel went to services at Greenwood URC Church. South St Albans Churches offered weekly conversation groups at Greenwood, with volunteers from St Stephen's, St Julian's, St Bart's and Greenwood. These were very successful and we learnt a lot about working in small groups with people who had little English.

Discussion topics have included: Transport, The human body, Anxiety, What/Where/How/When/Why/Don't/Can't, Road signs for cyclists, Health, Who am I?, Food, Using the telephone, Easter, Joining the Library.

WHEN?

We moved to St Bart's at Easter. We had enough helpers to run two sessions a week – Wednesday at Greenwood, and Thursday at St Bart's. Another group meets at the Cathedral on alternate Thursdays. We have met all the organisers to share resource suggestions.

WHO?

Each week 8 to 12 come to our group – a small proportion of the 140 living at the Noke Hotel, but it is difficult to contact them, and we hope others will come when they hear what we offer.

PRACTICAL HELP

We have helped them to apply for clothes and toiletries from refugee charities and have provided footballs and cricket sets for them to use in Greenwood Park.

BIKES

We have sourced 45 bikes through Churches Together in St Albans to give residents freedom to travel into and around St Albans. They are checked before sending them to the Noke. We are trying to arrange cycle training through Herts County Council.

RWANDA

Some asylum seekers at the Noke are worried about being sent to Rwanda. We hope and pray this will not happen as the uncertainty is affecting their mental health. Many have been at the Noke since October 2021 waiting for their papers to be processed.

Bishop Paul McAleenan visited our group before Easter, spending time with the asylum seekers, listening to their stories and offering comfort.

Parishioners who would like to help at the conversation group should contact Teresa Clarke
01727 855026,
clarkefamily2004@yahoo.co.uk



Picnic in the Abbey Orchard with asylum seekers, St Albans Pilgrimage Day, 25 June 2022

St Bart's Jubilee - 28 and 29 May 2022



Peter Godwin and a group of parishioners on the site of the Sowell Nunnery during the Jubilee Walk



Pizza party after the 6pm Youth Mass



Canon Robert Plourde, former Parish Priest of St Bart's



Earlier this year I was invited to help produce an Exhibition as part of the Parish 60th Anniversary weekend. An event worthy of great celebration!



Thankfully I found my copy of Jim Mullany's "Tales of St Bart's", a marvellous fount of parish history. Enrolling Jim and Barbara Bliss, we three musketeers together with Fr Francis ploughed through the Parish archives discovering many special items, in particular the Parish Banner, Christ the Redeemer statue, and the hand-embroidered 'Stations of the Cross'.



Next step was to ask parishioners and groups for contributions, resulting in a treasure trove of artefacts and memories. My dining room became awash with documents, letters, display materials and memory-jerking photographs. Preparing the topics for display was shared out, with printer cartridges used up as if going out of fashion!

So many people generously played their part putting it all together - just in time! A splendid effort. Thank you to you all.

Carole Cooper, Exhibition curator

St Bart's Jubilee - 28 and 29 May 2022



The Jubilee procession on Sunday began at St Stephen's Church, welcomed by their vicar Rev. Becky Leach. Our Lady was carried from St Stephen's to St Bart's on a plinth specially designed and made by John Lambert. The statue thus arrived safely at our newly enhanced Marian Chapel.



After the concelebrated Mass.

From left: Fr Michael O'Boy (Parish Priest of St Alban and St Stephen), Fr David Williamson (former Parish Priest of St Bart's), Denis D'Silva, Bishop Paul McAleenan, our Fr Francis Antwi-Darkwah, Deacon Justin Cross, Fr Peter Dwyer and Canon Robert Plourde (former Parish Priest of St Bart's).



Parishioners enjoying themselves after the Sunday Mass, at the Jubilee Party in St Adrian's School.



Alban Pilgrimage

22 June is the most important day of the year in St Albans. On this day around the year 250 a man called Alban died for refusing to deny Christ. It is because of this a town called St Albans exists and we are all living here today! The Roman city of Verulamium decayed and became deserted and a small church was built over Alban's burial place.

This became a sacred miraculous place and changed into a Saxon Abbey in 793, then a huge Norman abbey in the 1080s becoming the Cathedral we know today. The town grew beside the Abbey.

Every year Alban is remembered, and St Albans as a place of pilgrimage is remembered, on 22 June. Alban was the protomartyr, the first to die for his faith in Christ in Britain. He could have been the patron saint of England rather than the mythical St George. In recent years a Procession has been organised on the nearest Saturday to 22 June featuring giant puppets re-enacting the story of the martyrdom. It is a fantastic opportunity for all locals to come together to give thanks and celebrate the actions of this great saint.

This year a group from St Bart's, with a number of asylum seekers (see article Conversation Classes with Asylum Seekers) took part with us in the procession down St Peter's Street and George Street to the west front of the Cathedral. It was great to use our St Bart's banner. The weather was kind and it was a wonderful spectacle. The celebrations continued in the Abbey orchard alongside with the Tudor themed carnival and a picnic together (see page 7).

Next year let's all be there with our banner!

