

Parish Annual Report

2024



St John
the Baptist
Tamworth



Sacred
Heart
Tamworth

Two Churches, One Vision

Significant changes & challenges

We are used to saying goodbye to our priests, but it is always sad. We knew we would miss Fr Ramesh but were confident he would do great work in his new parish in Aldridge. We welcomed two priests Fr Karun and Fr Venkat from India. They too are members of the Missionaries of Faith. Their joy, humility and friendliness have already endeared them to us all.

In October Fr Michael told us of his cancer diagnosis. It was a shock for him and the whole community. The promise of so many prayers, including a prayer vigil, show the parish's love and respect for him. We were delighted to see him at Christmas Masses while his treatment was underway.

Deacon Brian decided to step down from formal deacon duties. He has been an amazing, humble deacon but we are pleased that he remains at Sacred Heart supporting Nora and the parish. Pat Standen continues to train for the Diaconate. Rebecca Downes now works part time in the office as Children and Family worker to support and develop our work with young people and families. She has made a big impact already.

Aleks, our man in the caravan, moved back to Latvia after 6 years. He did great work, including the Tau cross hanging over the entrance to Sacred Heart (made from unused benches), the wooden section of the Ambo at St John's and many more jobs. His presence offered us friendship and protection. We hope we did something to help him too.

Both primary schools lost excellent headteachers. We wish John Hayes every blessing as he works through what he will do in 'retirement' and Michelle Walsh now leading two schools in Sutton. We welcomed Will Bright as our new head in St Gabriel's with Anna Moloney now assisting him and Sarah Colloff as acting head in St Elizabeth's.



Significant changes & challenges

It was a sad year for those who lost loved ones. We remember much-loved parishioners and pray for the many family members who are grieving.

Many new parishioners have been welcomed into the Parish. We started doing welcoming events to get to know them and introduce them to the parish. Already quite a few have become involved in parish life. At Easter we also welcomed 15 people into the Church.

Discernment

Our September Leadership Away Days in Soli House reviewed the previous 12 months and looked at the priorities for the coming year and came away with three areas of focus:

1. More consultation with parishioners and connecting with new parishioners
2. Parish infrastructure
3. Evangelisation and Jubilee

Steering groups have been formed to work on these areas. The discernment must involve more parishioners in a spirit of synodality, so 2025 will see more consultation/listening taking place.



Worship

Our Tuesday meetings always review Sunday worship because it is central to all we do. It needs to honour God, enable prayer that is joyful and be welcoming to the wider community. Readers, musicians, wardens, singers, altar servers and clergy work hard to achieve this.

Our Easter preparations were enriched by a presentation of 'Born for This' which involved over 50 people from the Parish and beyond, in a powerful presentation of the Stations of the cross. This included a team of volunteers with expertise in singing, drama, sign language, lighting and sound. This strengthened the faith of those who took part but also deeply moved those who attended.

The Polish Community hold a monthly Mass at Sacred Heart on Saturday evenings which are charismatic in style - readings, hymns and bidding prayers are in Polish, but the Masses are led by our priests in English. These are welcomed by the Polish Community as is the annual Świąconka- or Polish Blessing of the Easter Baskets which took place on Holy Saturday with nearly 500 people attending this outside service.

Involving more young people in Liturgy has been a regular feature of our worship in 2024, with more young people stepping up to read or sing at all four Masses.

Towards the end of the year, we also held a powerful healing service 'Touching the Robe' and offering the Sacrament of the Sick to those who wanted it.

We commissioned Justyna Halik to paint stations of the cross. The Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee were delighted that the artwork reflects art already in Sacred Heart. Via the parish council we also spoke to over 200 parishioners who approved. This was reflected in sponsorship of each station (we could have had them sponsored 5 times).

Three School Carol Services and a Parish Carol Service were a major feature during Advent with large crowds of people appreciating these moving services. Christmas masses were packed. We added a Firework display after our 4pm Mass at Sacred Heart on Christmas Eve to celebrate Christmas and welcome in the start of the Jubilee Year.



Gospel in Action

A large team of Eucharistic ministers visit the housebound each week with communion – a really important ministry to parishioners often feeling isolated. Some of them love to watch the Mass livestreamed from our churches each Sunday too. It means a lot to them.

Catherine Smith (Chair), Jen and the Heart of Tamworth team had another great year. The work of the volunteers has been recognised with the King's Award for Voluntary Service (like an MBE for charities). Over 100 of the volunteers are parishioners, joined by as many great volunteers from the wider community.

The Lord Lieutenant has given this award to over 100 organisations. He said *"in all that time I have never come across a charity doing such breadth of work across a community."* The value of this work is so important since we are reaching out to thousands who are suffering from bereavement, mental health problems, loneliness, dementia, food poverty. They are all God's children and this is a way to show them that God, in us, cares for them.

We opened two new project facilities – the HoT shops, to enable distribution of food and clothing in more dignified settings. The building work was completed with fundraising and project management by the parish and support with help in kind from companies like Lambe Construction, BHB Architects and AWLumb. Funding came from the Gubay Foundation and Garfield Weston. Facilities included a fabulous garden area, composting project, solar panels (funded by Severn Trent and donations) – all showing our concern for God's creation.

Over 100 young people experienced a fun time on the two-week summer-scheme organised by a Team of leaders working with Alex & Rhiannon co-ordinating over 40 volunteers. Places are reserved for young people who are struggling in the local community. We thank SPACE for funding this.

Rhiannon oversees our two youth groups and looks after the older group. Phoenix was led by Becky, Liz, Annette and Gemma with support from Stacey, Rebecca and others at different stages of the year. We thank them for the tremendous work they have done.



Events

Fundraising and Fun are two main features of our Events programme. Fundraising because we need to have strong finances to develop our mission. The fun helps us to thrive and connect.

Summer Fayre with Firewalk and Christmas Fayre with Santa bring in the crowds from the community and have been a huge success again. Julie Charles and Jayne Callaghan lead on these. The Bonfire Night is another fun event, which was a tremendous success again this year. Many thanks to Simon Cross and his team for organising these events,

Schools

We have two excellent Primary Schools and our links with these are strong. Fr Ramesh, Fr Venkat and Fr Karun visited the schools each week for Mass and at other times to assist within the school. Alex helped with the Yr 3 S.G. Retreat at Sacred Heart and assists with music at St Gabriel's. Alex also visits St Elizabeth's for some school Masses and connects there with families regarding the catechesis programme.

St Gabriel's held a Vocations week - 17 parishioners visited the school that week to give a talk on their vocation.

For many of the parents' evenings a Parish representative is present at both St Elizabeth's and St Gabriel's. It is lovely to spend time with the staff and parents of both schools who always make us feel most welcome.



Stewardship

The accounts are attached. This year we added the accounts from 15 years ago, as a comparison. It gives some indication of how and where money is spent and how that has changed. In some areas it has greatly increased while in other areas, despite high inflation, spending is less.

Building maintenance remains a major expense. Work on painting and re-roofing St John's former presbytery was/is expensive. We take care to do all jobs to a high standard with local trades people, but with help in kind and by project managing it ourselves. It's more work but has saved us hundreds of thousands of pounds over the last 15 years.

We want money to be spent on the mission and we thank you all for your generous weekly giving and many donations. We also thank all those who have left bequests to the parish over the years. Without your giving, this work doesn't happen.





Sacred Heart Church

Silverlink Road, Tamworth,
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St John the Baptist Church

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The parish is a parish within the Archdiocese of Birmingham
Registered Charity No: 234216



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

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