

PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT TO AGM MEETING APRIL 2024

During 2023, we celebrated seventeen baptisms (including four at EWP), two weddings and twelve funerals in addition to the Weekly and Sunday masses. We had a very successful First Holy Communion day for nine children, and we can only hope that the children will be able to continue to attend mass and receive communion in the future.

The masses over the 2023 Christmas weekend were particularly well attended with the numbers at Christ the King's vigil mass breaking records with a very full church. It is usual at this time of year for numbers to be inflated as families get together and visitors swell our numbers. Welcome as all the parishioners and their visitors were, one can only hope that many of those who perhaps only attend at Christmastime, will consider visiting a little more often.

I am pleased to say that the Children's Liturgy restarted in the year, and I am grateful to those parishioners who have helped organise and support the occasion each week at the 10.30am mass in Christ the King.

We continue to build good links with Christ The King Primary School, who put on an excellent Christmas Carol Concert in a packed Church and with whom we have celebrated individual Class Masses, joint School with Parishioner Masses (for the Epiphany and Ash Wednesday last year) and other events as they occur. We are fortunate to have such an excellent school on our doorstep.

Each year, the Salvatorians have a retreat for their community and in 2023 we went to Llandudno for a few days of prayer and reflection as well as the opportunity to renew friendships. As always this was a most prayerful and pleasant event.

The start of 2024 saw the beginning of the new deanery arrangements within the diocese. For many parishioners, I do recognise that the inclusion of a church within a particular deanery doesn't have much impact and it's fair to say that the primary beneficiaries are the clergy who can come together in local groups to keep abreast of important diocesan issues.

The restructuring of the deaneries was primarily brought about by the steadily reducing number of clergy across the diocese, but we shall have to wait and see whether the decision to locate Christ the King and Holy Cross churches in a Gloucestershire deanery and away from the north Bristol deanery where it has happily been positioned for some years, is an effective move.

The decision to sell the former presbytery at 13 Old Town in Wotton-under-Edge has involved some significant building work. We have had to reconnect a room that was originally part of the house (and then subsequently attached to the church for use as an office). This has involved blocking up and reopening doorways and re-routing electricity and plumbing supplies. That work is nearing completion, and we hope to be able to put the house on the market in the near future.

Other remedial work has been undertaken during the year to help ensure that the fabric of both of our churches is well-maintained and I am particularly grateful to Graham Hunter for all his untiring support in this work.

Much happens in the parish that we take for granted and I do want to remind parishioners of the many facilities that fellow parishioners are working hard to provide. The Repository provides a wide range of religious items as well as an excellent stock of cards. The items are sold at near cost price and the sales are used to provide gifts for Holy Communion and Confirmation candidates, so I do encourage parishioners to take advantage of this valuable resource.

Social gatherings are important to keep the church members together and the Friday and Sunday coffee mornings provide an ideal venue to meet up with old and new friends and are particularly important for new parishioners. Our music evenings and Quiz nights are well supported but more new faces will be very welcome.

I continue to be well supported by our two Deacons, Lawrence and Kingsley, who both have other responsibilities of their own (Kingsley in terms of the Thornbury and Wotton Churches Together and Lawrence in terms of Diocesan responsibilities for the Deacons). Together with them we are privileged to be your Parish Clergy Team both for Holy Cross and Christ The King Churches.

Fr George
Parish Priest