**HeartStone: the paired Parish of**

**SACRED HEART and St JOHN STONE**

**in the Archdiocese of Liverpool**

**Parish Vision Statement**

*Jesus Christ is uniting our community of HeartStone in its Vision and Mission*

*so that all might find a place of welcome, prayer and loving outreach when in need.*

**PARISH PRIEST’S REPORT**

**in preparation for the**

**PARISH OPEN FORUM: Wednesday 7th November 2018**

**OUR TIMES:** Well, is austerity over or not? It is a full 8 years since the horrendous errors of bad judgment by banks made life so much harder for many in need…and then the British referendum fuelled fear and uncertainty by opting to leave the European Union. The Universal Credit reform of benefits for the needy in Britain was a fine initiative to simplify, motivate and help those in state need….until the then-chancellor took £2billion out of the funds needed to make it work…and now will it help at all or make life worse?

Is it any wonder there is widespread, maybe worldwide, loss of confidence in the leaders, elected or not, in political and civic life? Dreadfully this is fermenting a narrow-minded knee-jerk to “me-first” or “me-only” and the fearful closing of borders and maybe national hearts.

How horrible that amidst this social and moral turmoil, the very worst side of the institutional life of our Church has (rightly) caused such scandal and horror across the world. The sexual abuse and leadership cover up scandals from decades, has exposed important flaws in how we run the church, how formation of clergy and Bishops is inadequate, how the Baptised faithful have no power, and some seek no responsibility to hold Bishops and leaders accountable for what we preach about the Gospel. We live with shame in many ways.

HOWEVER – we place our hope in the continued action of God and his Spirit among us, and the RENEWAL HAS BEGUN.

Please God, Pope Francis will be able to continue good actions with his fine words and efforts so far to renew the power centres in the Vatican. Archbishop Malcolm, returning from the English Bishops recent visit to Rome to give account of the life of the Church in Britain, assures us that things are improving, progressing and changes are under way at the top, and how the centre of the Church organisation in Rome relates to the periphery of the local, national Churches.

**THE THIRD MILLENNIUM**

SYNODALITY: this is how Pope Francis is renewing much in the Church, with very much the same thinking, commitments and actions that Archbishop Malcolm is following in the archdiocese. He said how good it was to know that his boss and he were thinking on the same lines!

This Synodality is “the path God expects of His Church in the third millennium” in which all believers walk together in dialogue, there are practical ways for all Baptised Catholics to participate in discussion and discernment about the ways God asks us to change, to improve the mission of the Church for the future. Hence the timely call of the Archbishop for

**SYNOD 2020:**

* Year#1: 2018, the start of sustained prayer for God to give us fresh Vision
* Year#2: 2019, for representatives to help the parish, communities and pastoral area churches discuss and reflect what needs to change
* Year#3: 2020, the themes and proposals emerging to go forward to the Synod Gathering on 17th October 2020 for decision and the ways then
* for 2021: implementation across the Archdiocese of how God is calling us to be in his Church for our children and grandchildren’s blessings.

The leaflets and newsletters are explaining the steps of preparation and participation, and before 14th December we must decide and supply to the Synod co-ordinating team the names of Members of the Synod to represent:

* one Member from each parish
* an additional 8 Members from the pastoral area e.g. from the youth, Deacon, care of the sick, social concern etc.

All issues and concerns are part of the discussions at the start of our Synod journey. At some point before Autumn 2019 Archbishop Malcolm will let us know what will become the themes and proposals to continue with:

* **which issues we can decide and do in the Archdiocese ourselves with the authority of the Bishop**
* **which matters are beyond our power and the authority of a Bishop and these he will ensure are taken to the Vatican offices at the top.**

I find this honesty very encouraging, and the closest we have ever had to the Pope and Cardinals hearing directly from a consultation among the faithful in our local church. It will also show the demands of what is our responsibility to carry out. Perhaps this will enable the Bishops Conference of England and Wales, to receive some items for their agenda also.

**EQUALITY**

In the world there is strong movement to improve the safety and DIGNITY of **women** against unwarranted, selfish harassment and exploitation by men, i.e. people in privilege. This will surely feature in demands for renewal in the life of our Church as well. What will #MeToo and #Time’sUp look like for Catholics?

A renewal and more positive teaching of the gift and beauties of **sexuality** is on the cards also, not least as an integral part of a healthy approach to true, adult **holiness** that is recently a strong call from Pope Francis.

We must ensure that our Christian version of these necessary renewals and improvements is truly Christian, and not follow the excess and selfish individualisms of the dark side of the otherwise good movement in secular life.

**Power and position** is under constant challenge to be just, transparent and accountable, and so it must be, more, in the organised life of the Church as well.

As the **dignity** of citizens in society is being defended more, so it will be in the call for **adult participation** in the processes and structures of the Church, as appealed for in the Second Vatican Council more than 50 years ago.

**Arising from the Eucharistic Congress, I have started the custom in the liturgy of enacting the teaching of Christ that in the Church the leaders are to be last as servants by serving communion with the other ministers before receiving as celebrant. Also the communion at our Sunday Eucharist will be taken from the one bread, broken for each, no longer from small individual communions. Adoration will continue at the customary times.**

**MISSIONARY**

It is already clear that part of the prayer and action called for in the Synod comes from the teaching of Pope Francis that the Archbishop has highlighted:

* **how do we become more missionary as a church for our times?**

Already, as part of developing our Parish Vision and the priority of loving outreach, some parishioners have been working with me to find fresh ways for the faith to flourish on the West Coast of the Archdiocese.

The annual appeal in **“Come and See”** for enquirers about the faith and maybe new Catholics has been unfruitful this year so far.

But already we were preparing alternative invitations, including the 4 sessions without any commitment which have become called the “**Eye Opener Sessions”**. These we trialled in the summer and will relaunch over the Christmas period to invite people to join in from January 2019.

For the whole parish to be involved in different ways of spreading the faith and sharing the Gospel with other people…we are so blessed in the **Living Christ Retreat**. Our wonderful team of ministers now serve this invitation twice a year, for people to talk together about their faith and lives. This gives great **confidence** in recognizing God’s hand in our lives and being able to say so. The next Living Christ Retreat is Friday 8th/Saturday 9th March 2019

**The Cursillo** is another way of growing in faith and confidence, very similar to the Living Christ, but over 3days and residential at St Joseph’s, Freshfield. The next 3days is 15th -18th November and then in 2019 after Easter.

**Christian Unity** continues to be a vital part of our missionary efforts today. Thanks God our Ainsdale Covenant and the Southport Ecumenism is valuable and real, and hopes are high for the retreat:

**“The Scandal of Christian Disunity** – why it must stop now!” an ecumenical retreat at Freshfield on Wed/Thurs, 28th/29th November, 10-5, £25. all welcome. Prayer and talks led by Fr Chris Thomas and Bishop Cyril Ashton

**LEADERSHIP AS SERVICE**

We are already in times when finding new ways for a community of faith to be sustained are being demanded. Among those changes is a sharing in leadership by responsible parishioners, and priests being willing to learn how to share in new ways. This can be threatening and demanding to all of us! But it is vital.

**Thank God** for the members of the Vision Team who are now engaged in finding fresh ways to serve the fruitfulness of the Parish Vision.

**Thank God** for the inspiration of Veronica Murphy in new ways of ministry with the Pilot Project of **Pastoral Associates**: HeartStone is part of this 3 year pilot now with modern ways of learning and supervision for the new people employed by the Archdiocese in 5 different areas.

**Thank God for Eleanor Lalley** who is our Pastoral Associate for 3 years from January 2019, especially to help develop our missionary outreach, and make the most of the Synod locally. She has worked with LACE’s Pastoral Formation for 8 years on family catechesis, sacramental preparation, Adoremus and other projects while volunteering in her local parish as a youth leader. She is passionate about parish life, scripture, supporting family life and creating a welcoming parish with the Eucharist as its centre

***OUR PARISH VISION* was launched at Pentecost 2016:**

**let us review and renew it as we participate in Synod 2020**

**so that by Pentecost 2021 we will celebrate 5 years of renewed mission**

**in Sacred Heart and St John Stone and the Archdiocese of Liverpool.**