



HeartStone: the paired Parish of Sacred Heart & St John Stone

Seeking fresh Vision and new Energy



RECORD OF PARISH OPEN FORUM Tuesday 26th January 2021 by Zoom

Moving into Resurrection not merely a Resuscitation

We live the crisis of Covid in a way that will make us worse or better as Catholics, we cannot be the same or merely go back to how it was. Our efforts towards renewal began before Covid: we have suspended our old parish vision statement and the parish prayer since April and, using the Synoding to help us locally, have invited all to contribute to our communal listening. **This Forum** represents a very significant step to knowing, formulating and committing to what is asked of us in a new Parish Vision and priorities of Mission.

危机

A time of danger; A time of opportunity;

WEIJI is the Chinese word for CRISIS (pronounced WAY-GEE)
The Chinese lettering for Weiji comprises both the character for
“Danger” and for “Opportunity”. Let us not waste this crisis in

Becoming the Church God is calling us to be.

THANK YOU to all who came to the zeeting and made it so lively and fruitful. This document is a record of the exchanges, and additional happenings since, so now can truly be viewed as something of a manifesto for the next chapter in the history of faith in our community –

subject to God’s, Covid’s and the Synod’s surprises if they can improve it!

THE ONE PARISH

The proposal that Archbishop Malcolm be asked to make **our two parishes into one**, via his consultation with the next council of clergy, was discussed. It was supported. The name of the bank account for the two churches would be very long if it was the name of the new parish “Sacred Heart and St John Stone” – so who knows? Lively concerns about whether Sacred Heart will be closed were voiced again, but they are only that, concerns, and there are no plans on anybody’s agenda.

Would the closer union of the Church Teams be a good growth from this union, and the Covid changes?

The Deanery is to change to include all the parishes from Seaforth to North Southport. When, it not announced yet and what is the purpose of a deanery now is yet to be worked out.

THE PARISH YEAR PLAN

This is a usual tool for everyone’s planning but of little use this indeterminate year! However, looking ahead a little is largely gathered around the liturgy seasons.

- † **Ministries:** Pope Francis has recently announced women can be lectors and acolytes on the sanctuary. This is a good example of the enlightened pastoral action of parishes being caught up years later by the official canon law of the universal governance. It does mean that Bishops and parishes can thoroughly resource and train ministers for these roles, advancing collaborative ministry in the liturgy and service of the people.
- † **Synod 2020/1:** a booklet will be produced with the final proposals this March; Synod is June 19th for decisions; a Pastoral Plan Group for implementation is being formed now; implementation is to start from the first Sunday of Advent 2021. It seems that LACE has closed, redundancies have been made, and the Pastoral Formation Department ended. We are awaiting news from the Archbishop.
- † **IT in Church: wi-fi is installed now** in St John Stone’s Church, investigating projector, screen and live-streaming. Digital music has been served by Val Stroud and new parishioners offer live music skills when appropriate, with there integrating as parishioners. Marian Hope invited them to Patchwork.
- † **Easter:** our plan is to start Baptisms again from Easter, and there is to be an ecumenical liturgy on Maundy Thursday
- † **Pentecost:** this is the time we are aiming to commit to our new Vision Statement. priorities of Mission, and Commission our new Parish Vision Team. We welcome new members Val Stroud, Chris Hawkhead, Steve Bousfield and Andrew Curtis to join Fr Tony, Monica Gannon and Anne Pickup.

- † **Parish Priest's Sabbatical:** for a couple of years now it has been planned and approved that Fr Tony would take a Sabbatical time over June/July/August of this year. The plan is to live in a hermitage in a Carmelite monastery in Sligo, all being well. This ministry time coincides with the 70th birthday for him and his twin.
- † **Elections:** Cath Barry informed us that Sefton does want to use Sacred Heart for polling in May.

THE VISION FOR PARISH LIFE

Our Synod motto of "Becoming the Church God is calling us to be" is married now to the challenges of Pope Francis in his teaching about parish life in our times, and this has been taken up in the Synod affirmations we accept:

Synod proposes that the Archdiocese heed the call of Pope Francis to be brave and courageous in renewing structures so that they are at the service of mission rather than self-preservation

Let's try to take that seriously (as everybody says these days!). What would that mean we must change?

I see the parish life as including and combining various aspects and ingredients of practising the faith, like facets of a crystal: absorbing, refracting and radiating light. We can use the titles of the Synod themes.

5 Facets of a Fully Functioning Parish

1. All Called and Gifted
2. Sharing the Mission of Jesus
3. How We Pray Together
4. Building Community, Nurturing Belonging
5. Servant Leadership, Alliances, Admin and Resources

Theme #1 ALL CALLED AND GIFTED -

Vatican 2 is seminal to the outlook of the **LAY VOCATION TO FOLLOW CHRIST** as primary in the Church now, and Archbishop Malcolm is very good at speaking of this as the culture of vocation we need.

"Lay people should not be regarded as 'collaborators' of the clergy, but rather as people who are really 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and acting...

It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission

with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church"

Archbishop Malcolm quoting Pope Benedict 16th

The Covid era presses us even more to adopt the attitude and actions that flow from this, as also articulated by so many Catholics in the Archdiocese:

Synod proposes that the Archdiocese commits to the promotion of the vocation of all the baptised and a culture of discernment of specific callings within that (1:22)

- ❖ **ADULT FAITH FORMATION** will contribute to this

Lifelong learning for practising the Faith can include also ways of Lay Ministry, Prayer and leading prayer.

Practical learning for supporting faith-sharing groupings as well as specific to ministries.

Through requests from the Living Christ Ministry **John Sullivan** has offered to start us off anew with talks on St Bonaventure, Maximus the Confessor and Hildegard of Bingen from his new book.

Scripture Learning was discussed at the Forum, and in particular a style that Kathy McCully found in Mill Hill of being unafraid to share opinions, feelings and questions with a knowledgeable input from someone. Monica told of how she had been helped with some learning from the Wednesday evening Sharing Scripture, which some parishioners also lead now as well as Fr Tony.

Eleanor continues to serve in **Echoes of God** sessions on Monday nights that are part of the national move to encourage Catholics to use the Bible more, entitled "God Who Speaks".

- ❖ **THE PARISH VISION TEAM**

This group, sharing oversight with the parish priest, is integral to the other ways of listening leadership within the faith community. We are so grateful to Gina Steed, Anne O'Callaghan and John Sullivan who have stepped down after their term and we now welcome **Val Stroud, Steve Bousfield, Chris Hawkhead and Andrew Curtis** to the new Vision Team. **With Fr Tony, Monica Gannon and Anne Pickup** we begin our induction together from Friday 12th Feb.

"Leadership is about creating, day by day, a domain in which we are able to participate in shaping the future. This is the deepest territory of leadership – collectively 'listening' to what is wanting to emerge in the world, and then having the courage to do what is required."

Joseph Jaworski: Synchronicity

Theme #2 SHARING THE MISSION OF JESUS

Recognizing that aspect of Christ's mission today which is calling people to be gifted, we might see the first facet as **SHARING IN** the blessings and fruits of faith. In this facet we can see that side of the faith which is **SHARING OUT** the fruits of that living - within the community of faith with each other yes, but especially in the wider society, reaching out, and in our contacts of ordinary life with all people and those in particular need.

- ❖ **"ASKing"** is the name of our revised invitation to new people to learn the faith with us, coming from Jesus' teaching : **"ASK** and it will be given to you; **SEEK** and you will find; **KNOCK** and it will be given to you" A -S-K We used to call this mission "Come and See". This revised outlook is more aware that we are all always asking, seeking etc and we welcome and include new people in fresh ways of **ACCOMPANIMENT** as outlined by Pope Francis among others.

Alpha has been used by some parishioners at the Forum to help new people, and may prove fruitful in the future with us?

- ❖ **THE LIVING CHRIST MINISTRY** is active again now. An invitation is given to all to receive and share in spiritual support to each other, with friendships if you like, and each going at their own pace in maturing faith. Mutual encouragement is the need from our Covid times, and we especially recommend talking together over

the 5 Ways of Sustaining our Relationship with Christ:

1. Pray every day
2. Cultivate a Grateful Heart
3. Participate in your Faith Community
4. Have a Care for Social Justice
5. Live in Reality

Groupings can offer help and enjoyment of the faith, see below under community, and people can voice what new things emerge and ask what will help from the parish.

❖ **FAITH DOING JUSTICE**

This is how I tend to talk about this facet of parish life: other people are more comfortable with a vocabulary of other things which are included in this, like charity, helping the poor, politics..... More and more Pope Francis calls us to renewal as a church to continue this proud tradition of Catholic life in the trials and tragedies of our own times. This does demand we help each other in learning also: **Synod Proposes that in order to form the faithful for practical action, resources are developed that allow Catholic Social Teaching to be an integral part of formation, catechesis and homilies (2:10)** We have begun new efforts at learning with the weekly sessions led by Eleanor with **"Fratelli Tutti"**, the teaching of the Pope on Social Friendship, linked to the Vatican Commission for Preparing the Future after Covid confinements.

Among the tragedies, and moral epidemics, of our times are VIOLENCE, HOMELESSNESS, MODERN SLAVERY, IMMIGRATION/REFUGEES, UNEMPLOYMENT - perhaps best approached if possible as a cluster of parishes in alliances?

- ❖ **OUR USUAL CHARITABLE ACTIONS** continue, those in groups in the parish, ecumenically, and individual generosity. In particular we discussed the renewal of **Our 3 Parish Chosen Charities**: I am sorry that some emails got lost in the lead up, and proposals not supported by the person being there do not get included, and the discussion led to agreement, with approval of Fr Tony, that we now choose:

- ☛ **Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)** to continue
- ☛ **Chaplaincy at Christ the King Catholic High School** to continue
- ☛ **Queenscourt Hospice** be adopted now

We will pay out what money is in the accounts for the charities and the discussion also included the great appreciation of how important the socials in SJS are for fundraising, and the sooner we get back the better for all, including the service to the local community as part of the socials.

❖ **ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION**

Synod proposes that every school and parish community develop and implement a 5, 10 and 15 year environmental plan based on the principles of Laudato Si.

Our annual Creation Team group have come up with a list of possibilities for the parish and for individuals

and now we can join together to start:

- **an ecological audit of the parish through Faiths4Change**
- **the offer to the local community with willing parishioners, to use part of the grounds in St John Stone for a community allotment or garden.** Subject to those taking responsibility and ensuring sustainability of such a project this could integrate faith and community, young people and not so young, appreciation of nature and shopping savings.

I felt bad at being insensitive to some who have ashes of loved ones in the gardens getting upset. I hope the subsequent newsletter helped ease things, and clarify that “grounds” does not mean around the actual church, and a lot of looking into details, and feelings, has yet to happen to make this project successful.

Theme #3 HOW WE PRAY TOGETHER

Covid and especially Lockdown have made us all appreciate the value, and challenges, of prayer personally and never take for granted again the power of coming together with others for prayer and mass!

Fr Tony in particular doesn't want to lose the beauty and power of the Garden Eucharists, using the outside more in our prayer and liturgy – and maybe even more fire and fireworks?

❖ **GROWING IN LEARNING**

People across the Archdiocese were loud in appealing through Synod that “**good liturgical formation and learning be developed for all the People of God, including priests.....we all value the importance of spiritual formation and accompaniment at each stage of the faith journey.....we increase the place of schools in the prayer life of the parish community.**”

❖ **OUR PARISH PRAYER;**

Fr Tony had proposed at the start of Lockdown#1 that we use the Magnificat Prayer of Mary instead of the former parish prayer. Now that **Anne O'Callaghan** is inviting others to join her ministry of praying for our community, shall we adopt the prayer she uses?:

*O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us.
May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings.
Help us to become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory.
Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. (...own intentions.....)
Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking,
we offer you these prayers in all your holy names O God. Amen*

Gina Steed has a ministry of Intercessory Prayer with a chain of pray-ers and candles, and intentions can get to her through the parish office at present.

GIFT continues as our monthly prayer group, open to everyone, and the initials stand for Growing In Faith Together. Monica is doing a grand job of leading this lately, monthly on the first Tuesday.

- ❖ **VIRTUAL CHURCH** will continue now, people having their own feeds and websites for prayers, scriptures and virtual masses. In St John Stone Church **we zoom masses now**, and have also started **house zoom eucharist** from the presbytery during this Stay at Home time. This will enable us in HeartStone to involve and include more people, during confinements from Covid or any other health reasons in the course of life.

Discussion included that there are no plans, or need, to extend internet to Sacred Heart, the expense means we are still thinking about adding screen, projector and livestreaming – and whether we will have the volunteers to make these possible during the liturgy in ordinary times. Copyright issues came up (and will surely multiply!) and whether to drop hymn books for virtual words, and whether there will be fewer people coming back on return to church! We still use the chat together before the silence at preparation for mass, and Marian Hope voiced for many appreciating the Private Prayer Time with exposition before mass, on Wednesdays at present.

Theme#4 BUILDING COMMUNITY and NURTURING BELONGING

This synod theme is again very evident in the teaching documents of Pope Francis in recent times, especially on the renewal of the parish in our era:

Synod proposes that in each pastoral area there be opportunities available to belong to small groups for formation, prayer, socialising and action

❖ **GROUPINGS will be offered.**

Experience from past groupings of various kinds shows that sustaining them and growing spontaneous friendships and trust is best served by a bit of structure and regularity. We have begun with the offer of groupings arising from the Living Christ Ministry, one of which calls itself a “faith-sharing group”. **The 5 Ways** is a good outline to use to talk over life together (see above in "Sharing the Mission of Jesus") or a group may use the facets of parish life. A Living Christ Retreat asap is part of our dreaming.

Synod further urges - opportunities to belong to supportive and formative small groups, such as family groups and sodalities, be developed so that they become essential building blocks of parishes

❖ **NEIGHBOURING:** is it possible for HeartStone to serve the wider community in forming friendship groupings, eg linking with the Community Association, ecumenical partners? Inviting people to group around common interests and hobbies is one way, a plan that got scuppered by the pandemic, so far! We already serve the community in some ways, and this is the invitation to new thinking:

- **the clubs management of the Archdiocese urge us** to dream of new ways of using our premises to serve local people: we began this with one zoom/meeting and Donna is keen
- **things like a walking group, bowls, cards and gardening** may spark some new ideas

❖ **HOME IS A HOLY PLACE**

“The domestic church” is what some theologians call this aspect of the Christian life: the central vocation of parents in marriage and other committed partnerships, the life of family - small or extended - and the presence of active, faithful love leavening all. Grandparents have become crucial, and how we can support the faith in the home is surely a vital mission for the future in Britain.

Synod certainly thinks so: there must be more collaboration and interaction to strengthen the home/school/parish partnership by using innovative ways of sharing faith, sharing gifts and resources and enabling joint projects

- ✚ **OUR HOME/SCHOOL/PARISH group** includes John Sullivan, Anne Pickup, Eleanor Lalley and Fr Tony. We are actively researching ways to help, using our links through Christ the King. We are urged on in this by so many voices through Synod for **“...chaplaincy...links between school and parish...appropriately ...what it means to be a Catholic school...”** (Theme#1 – 1:30f)

❖ **THE YOUNG**

Who will join us in this daring dream that HeartStone has something to offer young people, whose whole prospect is hit so hard by Covid and its costs? Who will offer to help the young into hope, faith, fulfilment and happiness in the Covid chapter of life on Planet Earth?

- ✚ Our Animate youth ministry is very able at helping us with Confirmation and Lourdes pilgrims
- ✚ We are already in alliance ecumenically with the Southport Area Schools Worker Trust (SASWT) Impact Extra and adult friends to youth through the CTiA.
- ✚ We dream of other Catholic parishes joining volunteers together in governors’ initiatives to cultivate community partnerships in Christ the King, for making the most of the Catholic Ethos
- ✚ Some of us have begun discernment and learning with **Million Minutes, a Catholic youth ministry** to accompany the young into fulfilling lives with a future open to Christ and the best of themselves
- ✚ We are hoping to begin with finding ways to ask the young how life is and what might be welcome – in addition to the den as a safe space in the SJS grounds!

Synod is very definite in affirming increased resources be allocated to young adult ministry and pastoral formation for those in the 18-30 age group while also wondering why few persevere in the practice of the faith.

- ❖ **SOCIALISING** is a great strength in HeartStone parish, and absent in many others in more modern times. From BBQs in Sacred Heart, Coffee and Chat, SVP lunches and Our Ladies Guild in St John Stone – what might be possible still to return to, or start afresh?
New Housing is progressing in Woodvale; Improve Woodvale our social action group is hoping for development soon in Sandbrook Way; should we link more with the Ainsdale Civic Society, and WACA?
 We serve the poor with the Christmas Panto in addition to the wednesday food market through **Place2Be**:
how will social life develop in HeartStone and our locality on our return?
 - **Can we try a social zoom again?** Inconclusive really, the discussion – people have their own. A quiz? A quiz with a fund-raising slant to it? Do let us know if you would welcome one – Fr Tony will talk to Tony!

5. PARISH RESOURCES AND ALLIANCES

- ❖ **CTiA: Churches Together in Ainsdale** is a graced partnership in faith and good works. The covenanted churches are also discerning together now “Becoming the Church God is calling us to be in Woodvale and Ainsdale”. As well as worship, and seasonal events for the village, we are involved together in the youth ministry, and charity such as the Ainsdale Lunch and Leisure centre, the Job Club and the Foodbank. What else is better together?
- ❖ **THE IRENAEUS PROJECT for Spirituality** is an alliance of long standing, and they are growing with new premises in Waterloo. I have donated substantially to them and we look forward to more service from Fr Chris and Sr Moira in our West Coast area of the Archdiocese.
- ❖ **SOUTHPORT CATHOLIC CHURCHES:** we are in partnership for Hospital and Hospice Ministry but little else alas. Perhaps we can form alliance around the School in future and serving the Young, past ministry was great but petered out. Past experience of parishioners at the Forum voiced disappointment that in past endeavours and movements from the Archdiocese it is the priests who find it hard to come together. Synod is hoping.....
- ❖ **CHARITIES WITH SPECIALIST EXPERTISE** will feature more and more, to prevent unnecessary duplication and managing. Some already linked to us are CAFOD, NUGENT, Alzheimers Society, Asylum Link etc
- ❖ **SAFEGUARDING:** Synod proposes that this is a standing agenda item at every parish council meeting and that the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Team lead on informing key thematic issues to be considered during the year. the Archbishop is committed to excellence in this area of Church life and to increased “**transparency, accountability and co-operation**” to see that it is a reality in the life of Catholic community and institution.
Gina Steed will continue in safeguarding service on her return from family responsibilities, and thank you to **Anne Pickup** the Sacred Heart link who is covering at present.
- ❖ **COMMUNICATIONS and STAFFING**
 In the parish admin, **Monica’s changed and shortened contract** is aimed at her developing communications and modern media.
A new secretary will be employed for general admin and management of finances. We thank Anne Coupe for helping Monica and Fr Tony in this area for some time now, and she is stepping down with our great gratitude. We have **renewed the computers** and upgraded the systems, added another and a new laptop, the upgraded census and database of parishioners will help in communications and care-calling for those isolated.
Zooming is here to stay and **Val Stroud** is offering to help anyone who wishes to get on board with this new means of linking up with others. We have bought a parish account on zoom.
Synod Proposes that the Archdiocese develops a new communication and media strategy that enables people to learn, be informed, communicate and evangelise
Eleanor is proving her worth, with new ideas and imagination for us all. She begins her 3rd year of the 3-year contract in the Pilot Project as our Pastoral Associate. She will concentrate on Youth with Home/School/ Parish
Frances continues to keep me in check and the house in good shape. She has reduced her hours to 2 days now.
Donna is sadly missed on furlough most of these months, but it is sure to be great and inventive to have her back.
- ❖ **MONEY:thank you to so many** who have continued to donate to parish income by standing order, cheques or even envelopes through the door. The parish bank balances together in November were £125,000. There is no relevance in the separate statements now because most bills over the last months for both churches have been paid by the SJS account.