



**St James the Great Parish's
Annual General Meeting
21st June 2018**

“A Future Not Our Own” - a prayer In memory of Blessed Oscar Romero (1917–1980)

It helps now and then to step back and take a long view.

The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives include everything.

*This is what we are about. **We plant the seeds that one day will grow.***

We water the seeds already planted knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realising this.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

*It may be incomplete, but it is **a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.***

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

by Bishop Ken Untener

Three years of Ministry at St James

“Planting the seeds that one day will grow

Watering the seeds already planted

*Laying foundations that will need further
development”*



When I arrived at St James, I found a thriving and vibrant community including e.g.:

- ✧ Good Catechetical Programmes of Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation
- ✧ An Advisory Group
- ✧ CWL
- ✧ Knights of St Colomba
- ✧ SVP
- ✧ Fun Run
- ✧ Fundraising Committee
- ✧ Finance Committee/Property Development Committee
- ✧ A good Music Ministry
- ✧ Organised Eucharistic and Readers group
- ✧ Welcomers' group.
- ✧ Dads and Me
- ✧ Mums and Toddlers group
- ✧ An Exceptional School attached to the Parish – St James Primary School.
- ✧ A Pre-School.
- ✧ A planned renovation of the Hall/Community Centre
- ✧ A Justice and Peace Group

I spent my first months here meeting with Parish groups, and with parishioners, to gain an understanding of both the parish's culture and its "landscape".

This was an important time of discernment and listening, and helped me to detect the strengths of the parish - and to identify what could help it to develop and flourish.

The parish had lots of activities, and active parishioners. But **in my opinion it lacked the infra structure** to help it become more **focussed and cohesive**. So I started thinking of introducing frameworks which could develop these aims more fully.

I knew that **a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC)** would help the parish by providing "an engine" to focus and develop its ministry - and our shared activities.

So we started working together during the Autumn of 2015 and **formally launched the PPC at the 11am Mass on 7th February 2016.**

Initially we included the potential for two Chairs, a Secretary, representatives from the Finance Committee and St James School, myself, and 12 parishioners who would be responsible for the different aspects of work within the parish.

We established **“Pillars”** to organise the PPC’s work, and these covered:

- ✧ Evangelisation
- ✧ The Social life of the Parish
- ✧ Young Church
- ✧ Communications
- ✧ Liturgy
- ✧ Finance
- ✧ Maintenance

Pam acted as the PPC's mentor for a while, to help us to develop into an effective working committee, and **we continue to work on team formation and have annual retreats.** Initially, the full PPC would meet every 6 weeks and we invited parishioners to join us at meetings if they wished to do so.

Shortly after we started the PPC, **we added the Pastoral Care Pillar,** to enhance the culture of care in our Parish. There is more to do but we're very pleased about **developments in our bereavement ministry, our growing awareness of mental health issues, and the introduction of a Memory Café for those facing the problems of dementia.**

I am very impressed by the **interest of so many parishioners in the activity of this Pillar. I wish that we can strengthen it and also develop it** – diversifying pastoral care for different needs in the parish. I wish to ensure that team members are trained too, so we have regular supervision and training with different speakers.

Examples of developments in other Pillars include:

✧ **The Liturgy Pillar:** Liturgy is of the **utmost importance for any parish.** Liturgies nourish our spiritual life both as individuals but also as a community. We try to make them welcoming, inclusive and relevant to every day life.

I would like to thank **Mike Cryne** who has been a very strong innovator in our **Music Ministry** here in a very short time. Unfortunately for us, Mike will be moving abroad with his wife for work soon. We will miss him and wish them both well.

We also have had the **introduction of Adoration on Wednesday mornings after Mass and also on the first Friday of the month in the evenings from 7.30pm-9.00pm.** I wish to encourage this type of prayer in the parish especially with the *National Eucharistic Congress in September – Adoremus.*

✧ In the **Social Pillar**, there has been **on-going work to develop the Friends of St James** and they are now included within this Pillar's umbrella. Our aim is that different parishioners can lead on different parish events.



The Autumn Festival helped us to enjoy and celebrate with our diverse ethnic and cultural groups and parishioners.

And **the Christmas Fair** was a very successful and inclusive event too.

We have also started **a Calendar of Events** to help with cohesion in the parish.

- ✧ **The Communications Pillar** - We have published our New Parishioners' Brochure, and we have a team of parishioners who are building and creating a new website. **I wish to thank Roger Wright** for the many years he spent creating and maintaining the Parish's website.
- ✧ **The Young Church Pillar** - We have a Young Church Group who meet with Susan Longhurst and with Pillar' members to organise different activities. For example, the **Film Night** before Christmas which was a success, being involved in the **Diocesan Faith in Action, the Careers' Fair** which was also a success, and our **work with the Confirmation young people**. I wish that this ministry will grow even further - **this is my hope and prayer**.
- ✧ **The Finance Pillar** – covers three activities now, Accounts, Property Development and Needs, and Fundraising. **We introduced the 200 Club, thanks to Ken Evans which has had good success, and I wish that Fundraising will also work closely with the Social Pillar.**

✧ The Evangelisation Pillar

This Pillar is crucial for our parish. Its main objective is to develop the Spiritual dimension of parishioners as individuals and community.

They have been trying to do this by ensuring that the Catechetical Programmes of Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation and Journey in Faith would remain fresh, informative and well delivered.

For me, the Journey in Faith Programme has been life giving, both for the parish and myself.

I wish to see a more cohesive Catechetical Programme where catechists are helped and trained to develop their skills but also to share resources amongst themselves.

✧ The Evangelisation Pillar organised the **‘Year of Mercy’** Wednesday evenings’ group, **the Advent and Lent programmes, and spiritual information evenings from ‘Art and Spirituality’ to ‘Theology of the Mass’** one Saturday.

We are organising **the Holy Land Pilgrimage** which has had a good response. I am hoping that this will be **a great spiritual experience for us all.**

And we have also had the **Rise Theatre Company’s production of the play “Romero”** which was well received.

I wish that these initiatives would continue and that more people would be encouraged to attend. I am aware that we need to work harder to get younger parents engaged in this process but I am aware as well that most of our parents are inundated with work and parenthood and with activities at the school.

Looking again at the role of the whole PPC:

During 2017, I considered that the PPC needed a formal Constitution which we have now agreed and introduced.

At the beginning of 2018, we decided that most of the PPC's work needed to happen outside of its main meetings, in devolved groups. Members of the PPC would each lead a Pillar and work with others.

So we reduced the number of scheduled meetings of the full PPC, so that each Pillar could have their own separate meetings.

Each Pillar would include a variety of parishioners who are interested in that Pillar's work, and Pillar leaders share information about their activities at full meetings of the PPC.

Since 2015 I have seen that the demographics of the parish are changing.

So what can we all do together?

- ✧ **To help** the activities and visions which I've mentioned today to develop and function well, we need to work together and help each other.
- ✧ Groups and individuals, without losing their identity, need at times to be willing to work under **one umbrella** for a shared purpose.
- ✧ And sometimes we need **to compromise** to keep the wellbeing of the parish in focus, that is, not an individual or group.

So what about the Future?

We will:

- ✧ Keep our eyes and ears open to the needs of the **changing reality** of our parish.
- ✧ **Participate in the National Eucharistic Congress** this September.
- ✧ I think it is time that we, as a parish, **would benefit from organising a mission.** I am hoping to start a conversation with the Evangelisation Pillar about this and I would like that a mission would be held in the **second part of 2019.**

My dream is to:

1. Create a multi-functional room in the church under the choir loft. This could be a:

- **pastoral care area,**
- **crying room for parents and toddlers,**
- **Lectio Divina sacred space,**
- **Catechetical area**
- **an Adoration Chapel** for during the week

2. Reconfigure the Foyer to be a more ascetically beautiful, welcoming and informative - not cluttered – space.

3. **Aim for a better Sacristy** and storage room with a refurbished corridor.
4. **Refurbish the Presbytery** - internally and externally.
5. We are in negotiation to introduce **web-streaming from our parish, for example, Masses and Adoration, and other Liturgical events.**

And

Now that we have renovated the flat at 281, this summer we are **renting out the flat** over the Parish Office. This will provide **extra revenue** for the parish.

I am thrilled by the growth of Wednesday's Mass, coffee/tea and Adoration. I wish to see it grow further.

For Parish' events we can concentrate on the:

- Easter Egg Hunt
- St James' Garden Party and Fun Run
- Christmas Fair
- New Year's Eve Party
- New Film Club
- Encouraging attendances for coffees and teas in the Community Centre on Sunday mornings after Mass.

“A beginning and a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.”

- ✧ The past three years have been a learning curve for me on a lot of levels.
- ✧ I have been ill and I thank God that I am now feeling that I am getting my energy back.
- ✧ I have learnt that I cannot please everyone with how I do things or because of who I am. I would like to apologise to anyone if I have offended by words or deeds.
- ✧ I would like to say how much I value my Wednesday ‘surgeries’ when parishioners can come and speak with me without appointments, and new parishioners and their families can come and introduce themselves to me. For me this is truly an invaluable time and I would encourage you all to use this opportunity and come and see me if you need to.

- ✧ I truly love being at St James and I feel that I have the welfare of the parish in my heart. The support that I feel here from many of you has been very humbling.
- ✧ I hope that if there is something that you think is not working, you will either come to speak with me, or with the PPC, I like to chat with you!
- ✧ In closing today, I would like to say that I think that **together we have been working hard** to develop and support our parish. There are many positive signs of growing diversity and inclusion - and there is more still to do. Thank you to everyone who is involved with this.

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*We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.*

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Amen.

