



Living with “Larger Pastoral Areas”

On the last weekend of January our Parish Priests read out Bishop Brian’s Pastoral Letter on “Larger Pastoral Areas”. It outlined proposals that the Diocese has been mulling over for several months now but which are based on a simple truth: we need to plan for a Diocese in which the pattern of one-priest-per parish is no longer the norm. Parishes therefore need to be grouped together into “Larger Pastoral Areas” in which needs and resources are thought about and managed collectively.

For parishes in Chester and district the Bishop’s proposals may not appear particularly radical—because for the past five years our parishes have already been meet-

ing regularly as the “Chester Pastoral Council” (CPC). The Council was able to invite Bishop Brian to attend its

Parishes proposed to form the new Chester Pastoral Area:

- ◆ St Werburgh
- ◆ St Francis
- ◆ St Clare
- ◆ St Theresa
- ◆ St Columba
- ◆ St Thomas Becket
- ◆ St Cuthbert

Note: the communities of Malpas, Farndon and Tattenhall would be linked to the Whitchurch Pastoral Area

February meeting to discuss the background to the proposals and their local implications.

Bishop Brian made it clear that the individual parishes

were not being abolished, but that “concern for the pastoral area will need to take precedence over purely parochial interests”. He also made it clear that where the proposals raise no particular local difficulties he would wish to see the new Pastoral Councils up and running by this summer.

The CPC is to pave the way for the new Pastoral Council by organising a Day (in May or June). Parishioners from across the district will be invited to meet up to consider how best the individual parishes might contribute to an effective and forward-looking Pastoral Council.

Watch out for details of the Pastoral Day.

News from afar

From an email sent by a parishioner of St Columba’s, currently in Hong Kong on a three-year posting with his firm ...

Looking at the St Columba newsletter on the website I saw the piece about the pastoral letter on the future of Parishes. I was struck by the different experience here in Hong Kong. Needing an English Mass we’ve tried a number of different services and Parishes. At the last count we’d been to five different churches. Every Mass has been full with people standing, and to be sure of a seat you need to be there 10-15 minutes early—even that is no guarantee. A couple of the churches actually have “church full” signs they can put up. The church we went to at Christmas for Midnight Mass ran three services concurrently, one in the church one in the school and one outside in the car park—which was the only one we could get in to. Whether this is the same outside of the city I can’t say because a large part of the numbers are driven by the immigrant population of which the biggest group are the Filipino maids. Anyway, a very different set of circumstances and challenges.

Young people mark “Live Simply” at St Theresa’s

November 26th 2006, the Feast of Christ the King and National Youth Sunday, was designated for the launch of CAFOD’s “Live Simply” project. At St. Theresa’s in Blacon, Chester a special Mass was led by the youngsters of the parish to introduce the project to the parishioners.

Encouraged by Fr Kenny and using the specially prepared Mass, (produced jointly by the Catholic Youth Service and CAFOD), the youngsters played an active part in all as-



pects of the Service; putting together the displays, preparing the altar, giving out Service sheets, doing the readings and bidding prayers and leading the singing.

After Mass, tea and coffee (Fairtrade of course) was served in the Parish Centre and the youngsters continued their involvement in the “Live Simply” project by helping

serve on the Fairtrade stall and urging parishioners to sign cards and gold links to show support for CAFOD’s “Unearth Justice” Campaign.

Our next event will explore one of the themes from the project in more depth. The youngsters will look at what they can do as individuals to live more simply and share these ideas with parishioners.

Well done to all our young people for making this such a special Sunday.

*Ann McCarthy
St Theresa’s Parish*

Helping homeless to help themselves

CATH, Chester Aid to the Homeless, has been supporting homeless people in the city and across the North West for many years. The Harold Tomlins Centre, near St Francis Church, provides various drop-in services, from food and showering facilities to accommodation services, education and training. It has now been open nearly 6 years, and over that time the numbers of clients and the complexity of their problems have increased, particularly around those who find themselves homeless through no real fault of their own such as family breakdown, debt and redundancy.

The Centre is a "one stop shop" for anyone with a problem...if the Centre can't sort the issue or at least get the ball rolling, they always know who can. For many though, it's a place of safety, somewhere to draw breath, and a provider of the all important listening ear.

It opens at half 8 in the morning, a busy time getting hot food into clients and listening to how they have got on overnight if they are not accommodated. They talk about plans for the day, and who needs what sort of assistance. Washing and clean clothes are organised and appointments made. The day continues in this vein, each

person coming through the door greeted and listened to. As many as possible are referred to the night shelter or to other hostels; those who choose to live rough



Harold Tomlins Day Centre, Grosvenor Street

are helped in whatever way possible. The day worker from the night shelter takes as many as possible over there to do various activities....they have a big garden with a veg patch and borders, and a thriving woodworking group who are currently making bird boxes, bird tables and wishing wells....quite a social enterprise! There is also a well-attended cookery class!

An education suite at the Centre is open

Monday to Friday and assists with everything from basic numeracy and literacy to composing CV's and job searches. They also do a pre-tenancy scheme looking at issues such as budgeting. This will obviously assist clients to hang onto their tenancy when they are lucky enough to get one.

Some of the clients do voluntary work; one chap in the night shelter currently helps at a charity shop twice a week and another goes to an animal sanctuary in North Wales.

The work of the Centre is endless, and they could not do as much as they do without the unstinting support of groups, including groups of parishioners from Chester churches. There is an on-going need for warm clothing, sleeping bags, hats, scarves and gloves and toiletries which all go to help the most needy of Chester. The generosity of parishioners makes all the difference.

*Maggie Burns
St Columba's Parish
01244 341509*

Attendance grows at Polish Mass

The growing numbers of Polish Catholics in Chester are now able to attend Mass in their native tongue twice a month. Northwich-based chaplain, Fr Edward Soska, comes to St Werburgh's on the second and fourth Sundays of each month to say Mass at 4.30 pm for the city's Polish community.

Attendance has grown healthily, with around 85 people attending one of the recent services. On this occasion there was a sprinkling of people in their fifties who, perhaps, have lived in the United Kingdom for some time, but the great

majority of people in the congregation were men and women in their twenties.

Parish priest, Fr Paul Shaw, confirms that this recent addition to the St Werburgh's timetable is proving especially attractive to younger Catholics. "It is mostly young people," he says, "students spending a gap year here, perhaps, to make a bit of money before going home to continue their studies. They're mostly from Poland, but we are also seeing quite a group from Slovakia and other countries in central and eastern Europe."

These recent developments in Chester reflect the wider picture across the United Kingdom, where more than 500,000 Poles have registered for work in the last two years. The bishops of England and Wales have now approved 163 Mass centres for Mass in Polish; their counterparts in Scotland have calculated that the Catholic community there has swelled by 50,000 since Poland joined the European Union in May 2004.

Stephen Tierney

2007—special celebration for Chester & St Werburgh

A princess turned nun, St. Werburgh is patron of Chester and of St. Werburgh's Parish. She was born about the year 650 AD, daughter of Wulfhere, the first Christian King of Mercia (a kingdom corresponding roughly in size to the Midlands today).

On her father's death, St. Werburgh became a nun at the convent founded in Ely by her great aunt, St Etheldreda. From there she conducted an active Christian mission and was renowned for her good and holy life. Stories of many spiritual healings and miracles are associated with her.

She established nunneries at Treckingham, Repton, Weedon and Hanbury in Staffordshire, the last named being her favourite house and it was here that she wished to be buried. However, when she died

at Treckingham (on 3rd February about AD 699) the people of Treckingham were so determined to keep her body that they guarded it day and night. But legend says that one night, when they were overcome by a deep sleep, the nuns from Hanbury stole her body back for burial at Hanbury, as Werburgh had directed, where it was placed in a new rich shrine.

At the end of the ninth century with the Danes invading Britain, the people of Hanbury feared for the safety of Werburgh's body. In Mercia at that time, Queen Aethelflaed, eldest daughter of Alfred the

Great, took a prominent part in the campaigns against the Vikings, extending Chester's Roman walls and re-fortifying the city. On 21st June 907, Queen Aethelflaed brought St Werburgh's relics from Hanbury to Chester, for protection from Danish attack. The relics were placed in a church on the site of the present Cathedral, the church then being named in her honour. For nearly 200 years pilgrims flocked to her shrine. The name "Werburgh" means "Safe City" and

when her remains were brought here, the city asked for her protection in return.

In 1092, the Norman earl of Chester, Hugh Lupus, decided to transform St. Werburgh's Church into a Benedictine Abbey, the Abbey of St. Werburgh. Her shrine continued to

be a great attraction for many centuries, until the dissolution of the monasteries. In 1540 Henry VIII closed St Werburgh's Abbey, but unlike so many others it did not become a ruin; in 1541, it was made a Cathedral of the newly formed Diocese of Chester, the monks being succeeded by the Dean and Chapter. It was renamed "The Cathedral Church of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary", the dedication it holds to this day, though we all know it simply as "Chester Cathedral".

*Bernice Meredith,
St Werburgh's Parish & Cathedral Guide*



This 1100th Anniversary Year of 2007, Bishop Brian celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at St Werburgh's Chester on her Feast Day 3rd February. We were joined by the Dean of Chester Cathedral, Dr Gordon McPhate, and other ecumenical friends from Chester.

The Mass was later followed by a Festival Evensong in Chester Cathedral attended both by Bishop Brian and the Anglican Bishop Peter Forster.

Photo: Geoff Curtis

Chester City celebrations, Festival of Werburgh 2007

Over the past few months, a group has been planning events surrounding St Werburgh's Summer Festival in June (Cathedral & City mark the Feast of St Werburgh on 21st June). All events outlined are in hand, though subject to confirmation. Please watch local press for full publicity.

June 16 & 17:

Viking re-enactment village on the Dean's Field. Pilgrimage from Hanbury begins.

June 18-22:

Local produce stalls situated in Abbey Square.

June 19 & 21:

Performances of Midsummer Night's Dream on Cathedral Green. The performance on 21st will begin at 2.00am (yes 2.00am!) to catch the sunrise.

June 21:

Arrival of the Pilgrims from Hanbury. Although only a small group will actually walk the Pilgrimage, it is hoped that up to 1,000 people will join the walk closer to the City. The Lord Mayor and the Dean will meet the pilgrims. The Lord Mayor will accept the relics confirming St Werburgh as Protector of the City, which will then be handed to the Dean for safekeeping. Children to perform a musical piece in Town Hall Square and at 5.30 pm there will be Festival Evensong at the Cathedral.

June 23 & 24:

Midsummer Watch Parade. The giant figure of St Werburgh emerging from the west doors of the Cathedral accompanied by Sunday School children "geese".



A Parish History of St Cuthbert-by-the-Forest, Mouldsworth

Our picture shows Fr Joe Carney and Bill Cresswell at the launch of Bill's parish history of St Cuthbert's, which celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2005. The book has a Foreword by Bishop Brian and an Afterword by Fr Joe. As well as considering the church itself, the Parish History considers this part of Cheshire in the 16th Century and the effects of the Reformation on the catholic population over the years, referring also to the influence of the influx of seasonal Irish agricultural workers in the 20th century. Copies of the 59-page Parish History are obtainable from Bill Cresswell at £9.95 plus £1.44 P&P. Phone 01829 740511

Chester Pastoral Council

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Deadline for Summer 2007 issue: 31May

The current Chester Pastoral Council has been running informally since 2001, working on the basis that the Catholic parishes in Chester and district have much to gain from a sharing of ideas and resources as they carry out their Christian ministry. Unknowingly, we were building up a fund of knowledge and experience that can now be put to good use by the new-style Chester Pastoral Council that will be set up in response Bishop Brian's proposals for "Larger Pastoral Areas." Sadly, we need to say good bye to the communities of Malpas, Farndon and Tattenhall who now form part of the Whitchurch Pastoral Area, but we look forward to stronger links being built by the seven constituent parishes that will now firmly form part of the Chester Pastoral Area: St Clare, St Columba, St Cuthbert, St Francis, St Thomas Becket, St Theresa, St Werburgh.

Sunday Masses across the district:

St. Anthony's, Saltney (Wrexham Diocese)		Sun 11.00am
St. Clare's, Lache, Chester	Sat 6.00pm	Sun 9.30am
St. Columba's, Plas Newton, Chester	Sat 7.15pm	Sun 9.15 & 11.00am
St. Cuthbert's, Mouldsworth		Sun 9.00am
St Francis, Chester	Sat 6.30pm	Sun 8.00, 9.30 & 11.00am
St Joseph, Malpas (Saturday Vigil Mass is at Farndon URC)	Sat 4.30pm	Sun 9.00am
St Plegmund, Tattenhall		Sun 11.00am
St. Theresa's, Blacon, Chester	Sat 6.30pm	Sun 10.00am 5.30pm
St Thomas Becket, Tarporley	Sat 5.30pm	Sun 11.00am
St Werburgh, Chester (Sat Vigil Mass at Rowton Methodist Church)	Sat 6.00pm	Sun 9.00, 10.45am, 6.00pm

This is possibly the last time we carry information about Mass times for St Joseph's Malpas and St Plegmund's Tattenhall because, under Bishop Brian's proposals, those parishes will be grouped together with St George's Parish, Whitchurch.

Whatever the parish groupings, Mass and other service times have to be kept under review, and publicised effectively.

In the Chester Pastoral Council area, some progress has been made in the provision of key information on websites, but more remains to be done in this aspect of communication.

www.chestercatholic.org.uk

Organ Recitals at St Werburgh's

Come along and enjoy some of our recitals on the Binns-Sixsmith organ

◆ "Tuesdays-at-One" series:

Weekly from 15 May through to 11 September. 40/45 minute Lunchtime Recitals featuring members of the Chester & North-East Wales Organists' & Choirmasters' Association and friends. Retiring Collection.

◆ Evening Celebrity Recitals, 7.30pm:

Admission to each of these events is £5.00, including a programme and Interval Light Refreshments:

Tuesday 20 March: Features Norman Rimmer, Director of Music, Holy Trinity Church, Llandudno.

Tuesday 8 May: Features St. Asaph-based International Recitalist Graham Eccles.

Wednesday 22 August: An Evening of PIPE ORGAN FUN! presented and played by Mark Swinton, Assistant Organist, Bath Abbey.

Friday 21 September: "The Organist Entertains" featuring the one and only Nigel Ogden.



Fairtrade

Wine-tasting Evening

Friday 20th April 2007

8.00pm, St Columba's Hall
Plas Newton Lane, Chester

- Taste Fairtrade wines from Argentina, Chile & South Africa
- Fairtrade stalls and displays
 - Nibbles

Tickets £8 – phone 01244 317381

Proceeds to St Columba's Third World projects