

Message from Fr. Philip

2018 was my first full year in St. Michael's and much of it was a learning curve, meeting parishioners, celebrating Easter and First Communions for the first time and getting used to a new place and home. You all made me very welcome and supported by our parish, many of you were appreciative of my work and the celebrations we enjoyed together. All this helped me to settle in and feel part of the community, thank you very much for that welcome.

Our parish life has many aspects to it; we brought our safeguarding procedures up to date, we started regular meetings for our Finance Group and we encouraged parishioners to sign Gift Aid form to boost our income from the Customs and Revenue Office. We recruited new ministers for Holy Communion and new readers, we trained some new altar servers and were able to recruit two people authorised to record marriages for our parish.

At the beginning of Lent we enjoyed a Pancake Supper in the GS Room and during Lent we had soup lunches followed by a short course, we also followed the Station of the Cross. At Easter we shared a coach with St. Ives to enable people to join the Chrism Mass at St. John's Cathedral and then celebrate our own Easter Services here in St. Michael's. During the year, the Church in England had a Eucharistic Pilgrimage in Liverpool, sadly no one in our parish was able to go, but we shared in the prayer with a series of Holy Hours in preparation for the meeting, these were well supported. Our children were prepared for First Holy Communion and the younger ones continued their faith development: 20 children received their First Holy Communion. Many thanks to the catechists who make these classes possible and do a wonderful job passing on their faith to the children. During the year we had 28 baptisms and 11 funerals, we had 29 people who received Holy Communion at home. Our Mass attendance remains fairly static at about 400, including the Polish Community who use the Church every Sunday afternoon for Mass. During the year we started our First Friday Prayers each month, rosary and other prayers. We also re-instated the small chapel, new lights were installed and parishioners came and painted the walls. On 8th December we blessed the Statue of Our Lady which had come from the Good Shepherd Church; we also installed the Statue of the Good Shepherd at the same time. In September we started our Journey in Faith programme with two new people wanting to join the Catholic Church, they followed the programme faithfully and were received into the Church at Easter this year.

We joined the Diocesan pilgrimage to Walsingham and also the Diocesan Children's Pilgrimage. Some were first time pilgrims on both occasions and enjoyed the pilgrimage very much and look forward to going again in the future. We had a parish BBQ which happened to be on one of the few Sundays when it rained last summer, but a good time we had and the rain held off for long enough. We also had a Cream Tea Party in the garden which was a great success, both will be repeated. Speaking of the garden, big changes happened during the year, new grass was laid and much of the garden was cleared and levelled, this makes it easier to look after and to use for parish events. On 15th August some parishioners gathered to bless the Statue of Our Lady in the garden, this has proved to be very popular and many of you stop to pray there on the way in or out of the Church. We also did come work in the house which now feels much more like home for me.

This is just a short snapshot of our parish during 2018. You can find more details of all the things we do on the parish website at www.stmichaelrc.org. May God continue to bless our parish and our people.