

## **'Alive in Faith' Newsletter May 2024**

It has been some time since the last newsletter, so, the AiF Supervisory Committee has produced this update which summarises where we are with this most successful and essential fund-raising campaign. I hope that you will find this informative and encouraging, as The AiF Stewardship Committee do. Each part of this letter is written by members of the committee who have had a special interest in that area.

The Stewardship Committee has been privileged to be part of a wider process of assessment of projects and disbursement of funds raised during the 'Alive in Faith' campaign. It has helped shape decisions on funding for many parish projects, for support of seminarians, for priests entering retirement; and has been able to approve projects providing support to some of the most vulnerable in our society. These projects have come under the umbrella of 'social outreach' but they could also be termed 'corporal works of mercy' projects.

It has been nearly nine years since the first donations were made in the six parishes that began a five-year cycle of pledges and the last parish completed its cycle in January of this year. During this time parishioners throughout the diocese have raised over **£5.2 million** to finance vital projects enabling us to deliver our mission of providing Catholic worship throughout East Anglia. Some donors have kindly continued their pledges, so the total continues to grow.

Each parish had its own fundraising target, and once this was achieved most of the funds were returned to the parishes for their own projects. This has amounted to **£2.4 million**, nearly all of which has been drawn down for the sort of projects that you can read about below. About £200k of these funds are still to be spent. At the heart of the diocesan project was the life blood of our Faith; the priests of the diocese. While priests are in ministry within a parish, their financial needs are met by that parish, but the diocese is responsible for paying for our priests in retirement and in formation, and that is where the bulk of the diocesan share of the money raised has gone.



### **£1.1 million for Retired Priests.**

Over the nine years of the project ten priests have retired from active ministry and during the next ten years sixteen further priests will reach the retirement age of 75. Your generosity has allowed us to purchase or refurbish four retirement properties, as well as to fund, in conjunction with the Clergy Welfare Fund, the post of Clergy Welfare Officer. **£1.1 million** has been spent, and this fund will be fully used up this year.

**£1.2 million for Seminarians** Father Pat Cleary writes:

One of the key aspects of our Alive in Faith programme was to cover fees for seminarians. Each seminarian costs around £30,000 per year. Seminary fees are higher than university fees; smaller classes are one of the reasons for this.

As I write this, we're preparing for Good Shepherd Sunday (4th Sunday of Easter) a time when we pray for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

We have a collection in all parishes for the costs of training our future priests. This collection across the diocese pays for half the annual fees for one seminarian so you can see how vital the Alive in Faith money has been. I say 'has been' as the pot for seminarians runs dry this Summer (2024) and we are going to establish other streams of income to continue paying for our seminarians.

We've been blessed with at least 2 and up to 7 seminarians during the years that Alive in Faith has been in operation and it has done such a wonderful job in allowing us to accept candidates for priestly training. So, if you have been supporting Alive in Faith a special Thankyou from me, the Vocations director and the vocations team.





**£500k for Social Outreach/Corporal Works of Mercy Dr Claire Daunton writes:**

It will be no surprise that several of these have been directed at work with the homeless, in Norwich and King's Lynn but also in Cromer. Alive in Faith has been helped by being able to team up with the work of the SVP, for so long and in so many places, one of the Church's champions of social outreach. Homelessness and the many-faceted vulnerability that comes with it, blights lives and can bring despair. We know that funds from 'Alive in Faith' will assist the SVP in combatting this.



Another significant area of concern has been the safety of women vulnerable to domestic abuse, to rape and to people-trafficking, crimes that can go hidden for a long time and do so much long-term damage. Alive in Faith has worked with Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre and with Talitha Koum, the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Human Trafficking, as well with The Magdalene Group, a charity working to combat sexual violence and coercion, as well as child exploitation, in East Anglia.

There have been many other community projects, including support for food hubs, for Emmaus, for a prayer and listening ministry, for projects put forward by REACH, an independent charity that which helps families and individuals who are suffering from or struggling with the effects of financial crisis or hardship.

And at the start of the war, Alive in Faith responded to a call for charitable support from communities in Ukraine, a call that came directly from the Catholic community.



We hope that this work to date - with the hungry, the homeless, the vulnerable, those affected by war and hardship – has faithfully represented the wishes of the many donors whose generosity has supported these social outreach projects.



#### **£2.4 million for Parish Projects** Peter Ledger writes:

Alive in Faith was an astonishing fundraising success. That it happened at all was due to the extraordinary generosity of parishioners across the Diocese. However, central to the fundraising initiative was the undertaking that parishes would benefit directly from the generosity of their parishioners. Over the past nine years sixty-five parish projects have been approved by the Stewardship Committee.

These cover a wide range of initiatives, from modest to ambitious. Each one of them has had to meet the Alive in Faith criteria agreed by the parishes themselves. In particular, Social Outreach has demonstrated the determination of parishes to support Corporal Acts of Mercy. Sheringham and Cromer set the tone in May 2016, committing £4,500 to supporting Canaan House for the temporarily homeless. Aldeburgh followed twelve months later, donating substantial funds to support a Christian parish nurse. Wymondham committed £4,000 to the local Community Kitchen while two parishes, St Laurence, Cambridge, and North Walsham supported the social outreach work of the SVP in their communities.

As we go to press, St Etheldreda, Ely, located in a school catchment area of high poverty, has committed £10,000 to providing household items to support of the families of children



identified by their school as being in need. The objective is to improve living conditions of families in need and support the children in their engagement with education.

Youth projects have featured widely. Alive in Faith funds contributed £16,000 to children and youth group activities organised by Norwich Cathedral parish. Similarly Holy Apostles, Norwich organised youth and family activities while Alive in Faith funds enabled Buckden and Kings Lynn to send groups of young parishioners to World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal and Krakow in Poland.



Sound systems and music enhance our liturgy but can be expensive. Alive in Faith funds have made possible the acquisition of new organs at Buckden and St Mary Magdalen, Ipswich. Substantial sums were required, £11,500 and £6,000 respectively, and would not have been possible without Alive in Faith funds.

A remarkable initiative was undertaken by the Norwich Cathedral parish. As the mother church of the Diocese streaming of masses is important but the existing equipment was outdated. The parish is responsible for the interior of the cathedral and installed a sophisticated new live stream CCTV system costing £28,000. That is a large sum for any parish but resulted in over 22,000 people participating in the Ordination of Bishop Peter via YouTube. On the other hand, more modest but no less important sound system upgrades were made possible at Ipswich, St James, Swaffham and Whittlesey.

The Diocese owns a large estate of buildings. Parishes are required to maintain the buildings in their charge, an essential but often expensive responsibility. For example, the Grade 1 listed church of Our Lady and English Martyrs, Cambridge, required a new boiler.



Asbestos lagging had to be removed adding significantly to the cost. Alive in Faith funds of £44,500 provided almost 20% of the substantial cost.

However, building projects benefitting the local community often played an important part in decisions to proceed. The application from Sacred Heart and St Oswald, Peterborough, for funds to support the building of a new parish hall specifically mentioned that it was intended to be used by the wider local community as well as the parish.



Perhaps the most remarkable example was the application from Our Lady, Star of the Sea, Lowestoft. The application for building work and repairs to the church stated that it was to “facilitate increased use of the church by the local community”. The Lowestoft Choral Society, attracted by the fine acoustic of the Grade 1 listed building, regularly stages concerts in the church. The parish decided to include in their project a demountable stage so that more musical events could be hosted. This was an ambitious project costing over £330,000 but funding was obtained from both Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The most significant contribution, however, £21,000, came from the parish’s own Alive in Faith funds.

Applications for building projects were received from forty-one parishes. Many were significant projects - internal changes at Felixstowe, reordering and refurbishment of Hunstanton, essential repairs at Newmarket and Kirtling, a new sacristy and meeting room at Poringland, and the construction of a parish room and toilets at Walsingham. Several projects involved improved access for disabled parishioners, most ambitiously a lift to improve access to Stowmarket church hall.

The wide variety of projects approved is shown by Bungay installing solar panels on the roof of the parish hall, while Costessey funded reupholstering of kneelers. On the other hand, several projects improved safety with new electrical installations and fire warning systems.

A key objective of Alive in Faith was to ensure the Diocese has “strong and vibrant parishes that are addressing local needs.” The response of parishioners will be there for

years to come in the astonishing variety and ambition of the projects they set for their own parishes and local communities.



### **Summary and Conclusion**

Now that the cycles of giving are complete in every parish, we have scaled down our administration. Thank you for your generosity, but if you would like to continue to support AiF, unless you still have a Standing Order set up, we can only accept lump sums from now on. I would like to thank Father Denys Lloyd for chairing the committee for most of the period, and Lorna Young who has administered this huge project so well since its inception. Please do contact me, if you have any questions.

Deacon James Hurst

AiF Chair