

## Summary of HX Parish Meeting Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2025

There were 36 attendees at this meeting

### Over-arching themes running through the meeting:

#### A. How to encourage a sense of belonging in the parish?

This was raised in almost every talk:

- Involvement of parents and children during sacramental preparation
- The possibilities of school, teacher, parent and child involvement with the SCIAF project
- Wider advertising of parish social events in the parish and in both schools
- Fund-raising among all parishioners should foster more of a sense of belonging

#### B. Communication within the parish and with the wider community

Again this featured in many of the points raised:

- The need to raise awareness of all types of fund-raising and Gift-aid among parishioners
- Advertising the SCIAF project and getting the schools involved as well as the parish
- Ensuring we advertise social events as widely as possible including in the schools
- How do we let parishioners know about the many working groups within the parish?

### Individual Items on the Agenda

#### 1. Sacramental preparation

Father Hand presented possibilities regarding offering support to parents of children enrolled in preparation for the sacraments. Parents are the first teachers of the Faith but many practise a little or not at all. He sees an opportunity for the parish to engage with parents in a fruitful way by reaching out to them and offering a more interactive friendly experience at parish sacramental preparation meetings. He is looking for volunteers for a variety of possible tasks.

#### Points raised

- a) Questions were asked about how the system works now. The basics are in place, but FH would like to develop them further.
- b) The keeping of accurate records is an issue and needs more work. This is partly because we have so many children preparing for the sacraments so is fundamentally positive, but more clerical input is needed.

- c) Individual events could be richer but need volunteers.
- d) It's important to help parents and children develop a sense of belonging to the parish.
- e) It would be good to have a proper Parents Group to represent them in the parish and help us know their needs.
- f) We should maybe hold more sacramental preparation events in the parish rather than in the schools.
- g) Would a sacramental Sunday Mass once a month be helpful? Children could be given set tasks – like reading a bidding prayer each. This could encourage parent and child attendance at Mass.
- h) More parish communication with parents via the schools might be helpful, e.g. regular newsletters about everything that is happening in the parish (including foodbank in SMM, social events, etc).

## **2. SCIAF Zambian project**

Clare McManus thanked everyone for reflecting on, and voting for, a parish SCIAF project. The SCIAF group aim to work with the Social group to run various events to fund-raise. They also hope to help us all learn more about SCIAF's work, especially in Zambia, how our money is spent and what the outcomes are. The group will also work with the Liturgy group to run occasional SCIAF themed services. The project will formally launch after Easter to avoid confusion with the usual Lenten SCIAF events.

### **Points raised**

- a) Parish advertising, communication and involvement of all parishioners will be important
- b) Involvement of the schools would be very helpful (e.g. a photography competition related to climate change issues for school children but exhibited in one of the parish halls?)
- c) Separately a parishioner told us of an event in another church where placards of the nations where all visitors and parishioners were from were carried up to the altar at the Offertory Procession and left on display at the altar rails. This is a possible project for Pentecost Sunday.

## **3. Parish council working group**

Father Hand would like volunteers to join a parish council working group to think about the most effective way to run the parish and what exactly are we asking the many parish working group representatives to do. There are basically 2 models:

- A large council with various representatives of parish working groups sitting on it.
- Relatively independent working groups who collaborate with a small central council.

### Points raised

- a) The differences between a **Pastoral** and **Parish** Council?
- b) What exactly is the model now?
- c) Should the Finance Group be a central feature of the council or a stand-alone group – it will obviously always be a vital part of Parish life?
- d) What is the expected outcome of a re-design?
- e) Working group representatives who sit on the parish council sometimes feel that they have limited expertise in all but their own area and wonder whether they should attend all council meetings when they have little to say at some of them.

All of these points would be addressed by the new working group.

- f) While discussing less well-known working groups (e.g. the quilting group) another strand of discussion opened up around communication of what was going on in the parish – both for parishioners and the wider community including parents and schools. Should we make more use of social media? Should we have a quarterly parish magazine highlighting all the hard work that goes on in the parish?

## 4. St Margaret Mary project

Lorcan Mooney, in his role as Chair of the parish finance committee (he is also Property Director for the Archdiocese) presented information about a survey of St Margaret Mary's church. The church was built in 1938 and is B-listed. A list of the problems found in the survey is available in the meeting leaflet (available from the back of both churches).

We need to raise a total sum of approximately £320,000 to sort out all of these problems. Grant funding for £100,000 is being applied for at present. We will use some existing parish funds as well, but a condition set by the Archdiocese is that we, as a parish, must raise at least 15% of the cost, which means we must raise at least £30,000 – 35,000.

Unfortunately, due to rules set by some of the grant donors, we cannot start (or even get tenders) until we have been granted the funding, so this will probably mean Summer 2026 as the earliest possible start date for work.

### Points raised

- a) Regular giving, Gift-aid and Parish fund-raising will all be vitally important over the next two years – see **item 5**.

## 5. Parish fundraising

John Allan, Chair of the Parish Social Group, discussed fund-raising.

**Regular giving:** It would be really helpful if parishioners could complete **Standing Orders** if they would like to give regularly to the SMM refurbishment fund and / or SCIAF project. Parishioners should clearly state in the reference code which fund they are giving to and use 2 standing orders when they wish to contribute to both.

There will also be opportunities for **intermittent giving** with occasional church collections.

Even more importantly, parishioners are encouraged to ensure that **all** the money they give to the parish is covered by **GIFT-AID** (a painless way of getting additional government money funnelled back into the parish).

**Other types of fund-raising:** The **Parish Social Group** primarily exists to bring the parish together via various social events. However, a positive outcome of some of these events is that they end up in profit and this will now be channelled equally towards the SMM work and SCIAF project (except when an event is run specifically for one of these two causes).

The Parish Social Group will soon publish a Calendar of parish events from May 2025 – April 2026. Please note that this does NOT stop others from thinking up alternative social events and fund-raisers and the parish would be keen to be supportive of these, e.g. a Parish International night, individual parishioner events such as fund-raising coffee mornings or bake sales and taking part in fund-raising events such as the Edinburgh marathon or Kilt walk.

### Points raised

- a) We need to advertise widely to encourage every parishioner who donates to the parish and is a UK taxpayer to complete a Gift-aid form.
- b) Standing Order and Gift Aid forms will be handed out to those who want them after some Masses and are also available from the Parish House.
- c) It would be good to have a site on Facebook to encourage ex-parishioners to donate to the SMM fund (done successfully in an Irish parish).
- d) Iris Slater left a house to the parish, and we already use the rental funds from this for the running of the parish. It would be nice to have a Mass of commemoration for her some time.
- e) At some point we need to celebrate the centenary of the *building* of the church.
- f) The Archdiocese runs the “Pay a Charity” scheme online for donations to individual parishes. We will re-advertise this in the newsletter.
- g) For information: we already use the government run gift-aid reclamation scheme for any donations left by visitors to the parish.