

Report of the Chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council for 2008 – 2009

The winter was colder than in recent years and this seemed to produce more Requiems than usual. They are always a source of consolation to all. One funeral attendant was so impressed by the way they were conducted that he converted and became a Catholic.

Archbishop Kevin successfully completed heart bypass surgery and is now having both knee joints replaced. So his call for renewal is certainly giving us all a very good example.

One example from the Parish over the last year has been Sister Margaret Mary O'Grady. She has 'retired' to the Emerald Isle after years with us. She was a daily Mass goer, sat on the Parish Pastoral Council as well as that of the Deanery. She also ran the Canterbury Branch of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This seeks to foster understanding and union among all the Christian denominations, for Mary will be the reason for reunion and not an obstacle to it. We thank Sister and wish her well.

Fr Tom Herbst continues to give talks to enlighten and uplift us. In the Autumn he gave ten talks on the Church from about 500AD to 1500AD. Part

history and part theology, his broad brush covered all the main events over those thousand years. During this May he is giving five talks on the 'Reformation'. He now regularly takes the 6pm Mass on Sunday and is very much part of the Parish.

Fr Sylvester is very much part of our parish in the summer but visa problems prevented him coming last year. But all is in hand to ensure he is able to come this time round and it will be a delight to see him again.

The garden in front of the Church has been redesigned by the City Fathers. The flower beds have gone but a bonus is the nice path across the grass leading to the side entrance by the sacristy. It will be very useful when we go for meetings in the Upper Room.

One thing to look forward to is the gathering at Aylesford at the end of June to mark the end of the year of St Paul. All the usual activities are reported in the pages that follow.

And finally many thanks to the clergy who look after our spiritual needs so well.

Chris Bull – Chairman PPC

PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT

As usual, much of what I need to say has already been said by the Chairman of the PPC. Thank you, Chris! What I do need to do is to express my gratitude to the countless numbers of people in the parish who really do 'own' the parish and the church buildings. It would, of course, be invidious to name names – so I won't. They will know who they are, after all. When I think of those parishes where the priest is a one-man-band who does everything himself (is it because he doesn't trust others to do things 'properly?'), and when I turn my gaze to St Thomas' I count myself blessed. Thank you, everyone.

Father Sylvester will, I hope, be with us this summer. Nowadays, getting hold of a visa is an absolute nightmare. Fortunately, this huge administrative task is now borne largely by our Vicar General, Monsignor Richard Moth. He sends application forms to individual priests living abroad in which they seek permission to do supply work. His bishop is also asked to give written approval for his priest to absent himself from his diocese. Once these documents are assembled Monsignor Moth then applies to the UK Border Agency for a certificate to say that a visa may be granted. Armed with this document, the supply priest makes an application to the British Embassy for a visa. All this has to be done by snail-mail! Phew! I have e-mailed Father Sylvester with all the

Byzantine steps he must take, and I am glad to say that he is following them exactly! Barring some hiccup, Father Sylvester will be with us from 15th June until 15th September. It will be good to have him with us again. Last year, alas, he couldn't get a visa – as indeed was the case with many other priests in Africa and India who were refused. Now that the process of getting a visa has been clarified with the UK Border Agency there should be no problem for any of them. I hope this isn't going to be a case of 'famous last words'!

On the material level, we are looking at a fairly hefty bill for the installation of new lighting in the church, lighting that will be a vast improvement of what we have at the moment. Putting in new lighting will necessarily involve chipping away at the plaster to hide all the cabling. This in its turn will mean that the church will have to be redecorated (scaffolding!), hence the fairly hefty bill. I am told that the final bill will be somewhere in the region of £50,000, although it could be less. Obviously if you look at the accounts attached at the back, we will have to raise this sum through an appeal. I am more than confident that the generous people of St Thomas' will rise to the challenge! I shall be speaking more about this at our AGM on 1st June. Finally, my thanks once again go to everyone who makes St Thomas' such a lively and happy place to be. *Canon Michael Bunce – Parish Priest*

CANTERBURY PRISON

Well, it's been quite a busy year in the prison. Since I wrote my report last year much has happened. For one thing we have had the celebrations marking the 200th anniversary of the prison on its present site in Longport (1808 – 2008). New commemorative gardens at the front of the prison were officially opened at a special dedication service last Autumn. We also had a visit from Princess Anne. She met all the chaplains as well as members of the prison staff, governors, officers, and ancillary staff. The chaplains had the opportunity of telling her about our multi-faith vision for Canterbury prison and how it has developed since we became a Foreign National prison about three years ago. Another milestone was the chaplains in the prison being nominated for the prestigious Butler Trust Award – which we

won! The award was presented to a representative group of chaplains who went to Buckingham Palace to receive the award from Princess Anne, the Patron of the Trust. That was in March this year.

They were the highlights of the year. Naturally, the day-to-day work on the chaplains went on as usual, celebrating Mass, welcoming new arrivals, supporting offenders as well as staff members, and generally becoming involved in life behind walls. Sometimes the work can be very challenging, but it is never dull and monotonous. I am indebted to my two Catholic Chaplain's Assistants who do great work seeing the men on a one-to-one basis.

*Canon Michael Bunce
Catholic Prison Chaplain*

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION & RECONCILIATION PROGRAMME

This year twenty-six children are being prepared for their First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. I have a team of five catechists whose presence is a tremendous source of help and encouragement. What would I do without them? Four of the catechists each take a group of about seven children; the fifth catechist, together with myself, meets the parents of the children whilst the children are having their lessons. This arrangement works very well indeed. Gone are the days, thank heavens, when there was

little or no parental involvement. Nowadays, the parents are very much involved with helping their children with the work set by the catechists. Not only that, they become involved on a very practical level. For instance, they provided the food which we have at the Children's Passover Seder on Maundy Thursday (always a memorable occasion). Do, please, keep the children and their families in your prayers.

*Canon Michael Bunce Catechetical
Team Co-ordinator*

CONFIRMATION

The Confirmation Preparation Programme started on Pentecost Sunday. We had a great group of young people who enthusiastically attended each session and took a full part. Bishop John Hine administered the Sacrament of Confirmation during the 11am Mass on Sunday, 13th July. Twenty-four young people

and two adults were Confirmed. The preparation and the ceremony went extremely well and I am grateful to Cherry, Louise, Philip and Jean-Michelle for their work as catechists. The next parish Confirmation will be at 11am on Sunday, 20th Jne, 2010.

Father Richard Hearn

KENT & CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

The chaplaincy ministry at Kent & Canterbury Hospital runs in peaks and troughs and there are times when it appears that there are no Catholic patients in the hospital. This is of course unlikely but as we are no longer allowed to view hospital records (and often patients are not asked their religion), we have no way of knowing who is in the hospital. It is therefore vital that if you are going into hospital you let us know and if you end up there unexpectedly you ask for the chaplain to be told. If you know of anyone in hospital

who would like a visit please let the Presbytery know.

K & C has a good team of ecumenical volunteers who do sterling work in ensuring every ward is visited during the course of the week. The dedicated medical and nursing staff are always helpful and understanding of the work the chaplains and chaplaincy volunteers undertake.

Our team of Extraordinary Ministers continue to ensure that Holy Communion is taken to the patients on Sundays and at other times. There

have been some more changes in the team this year. Ruth Harrison, who had been a minister for many years, died suddenly which was of course a great shock to everyone. Our prayers were very much with Peter and his family at their most difficult time. Ruth and Peter would both visit the hospital on a regular basis and do great work in bringing support to patients and their families. Peter has now retired from hospital ministry and the grateful thanks of the parish go to him for his (and

Ruth's) many years of service. The hospital team has now been joined by Liza Velho and Gerry Buckles, who together with Felicity Foreman, David Heap and Anne Rooke continue to visit the hospital every week. I would like to thank them for all the work they do and express my appreciation for the support they give me.

*Father Richard Hearn
Hospital Chaplain*

THE SOLITUDE GROUP

The past year has been one of growth for the Solitude Group. We have continued to meet on the third Saturday of each month, at Greyfriars Chapel in Stour Street and are very grateful to the Brothers of the Society of St Francis for making us so welcome.

The form for our mornings is to meet for coffee between 9.00/9.30am, followed by a twenty minute period when a member presents a piece of Scripture and spiritual reading as an aide to silent prayer for the next hour and a quarter. We have use of both the Greyfriars chapel and its beautiful garden during this time. We reconvene at 11.15am, when there is an opportunity for optional sharing of our

prayer experience before our closing prayer. We are open to anyone who seeks a deeper relationship with God through contemplative prayer and so have an ecumenical membership. Twice during the year we have held an extended time of silence by spending a day at the Mercy Convent in Whitstable. In October our meeting took a different form as we followed the Stations of Creation based on St Francis' Canticle of the Creatures.

One of our members, Joan Blows, has developed and maintained the Prayer board at the back of the Church, within which pictures and texts reflect the Liturgical season.

Louise Beesley and Roberta Johnson

PRAYER GROUP

The Prayer Group is part of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement and meets on Wednesday at 2.15pm in the Upper Room. A typical meeting lasts for an hour and consists of a period of spontaneous praise and thanksgiving, reflection on a passage of scripture for the following Sunday, a time of listening to the Lord, a decade of the Rosary

and general intercessions. Individual prayer for healing is available after the meeting if requested.

In February, members assisted with the annual Day of Renewal at the Franciscan International Study Centre. The group also supports the Scrine Foundation with financial contributions.

Deacon David Avery

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

These Ministers have been formally commissioned to assist with the distribution of Holy Communion in the parish. Their primary function is to take the Sacrament to people who are housebound or in hospital and are unable to get to Mass.

They also help to administer Communion at Mass when there are not sufficient clergy officiating.

Each year, the Ministers are asked to make a public renewal of their commitment at Mass, usually on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

By law, all extraordinary ministers must obtain clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau, before they can commence their Ministry.

Deacon David Avery

11am CHOIR

The most noteworthy item of this year was the departure of Christian Lumsden after three years' tenure as organist and choirmaster. His personable character, virtuosity and enthusiasm have been deeply missed by the choir and many others in the parish and

beyond. Despite a well organised recruitment campaign, we have so far failed to find a suitable replacement.

Nevertheless the 11 o'clock choir has continued to function well. Helen Natrass and Roberta Johnson have taken on the role of

joint organists-choir directors for the time being. The choir has continued to sing every Sunday with the Gregorian chant Mass on the first Sunday of each month. We sing motets when sufficient personnel permit. The choir has performed several new compositions by Helen this year, particularly psalms in Lent and for the Triduum and Easter.

The 11 o'clock choir has contributed widely to Parish life this year. We prepared a Holy Hour for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in February 2009, and a most affecting Stations of the Cross with Ignatian Meditations and music during Lent 2009. We supported the singing of the Office of Morning Prayer over the Triduum. As always we sang for the St Thomas Mass in the Cathedral in July and the Vespers for St Thomas in the Cathedral on 29th December. Roberta organised an Epiphany Concert with afternoon tea, which was very well received.

The greatest problem for the 11 o'clock choir is the number of singers which is at a critically

low level. If people have to be away at weekends, the music for the Liturgy is always reduced. Fortunately we continue to have a good team of cantors so the psalm and acclamations are sung. We acknowledge that Mass is not a concert, but there are occasions when we would wish to contribute specially apt compositions for particular feasts, but cannot because we have not enough singers. We want to encourage more people to join us, but do not seem to have found the right way to attract them.

In the wider community, the 11 o'clock choir continues its association with St Dunstan's Choir and sang in their St Thomas More Service in July 2008. Members of our choir also belong to and are involved in organising events for the Canterbury Gregorian Music Society. A number of us sang in the choir which led the Gregorian Chant Compline celebrating St Anselm's 900th Anniversary in Canterbury Cathedral in April 2009.

Helen Natrass

UNION OF CATHOLIC MOTHERS (UCM)

St Thomas of Canterbury Foundation was founded 59 years ago. Though tasks and activities have varied over the years the group has always been involved in the many aspects of parish life.

Being united in prayer at our meetings creates a unique bond whilst enriching our spiritual lives. Bi-monthly meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month in the Upper Room. Meetings proper begin at 1pm, but on the 2nd Monday of each month at 12 noon the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered for the intentions of members.

Social occasions are built into our programme allowing us to enjoy each others company and friendships to develop. This year we have been both entertained and enlightened by a variety of speakers. Richard Sexton entertained us with a most enjoyable presentation on the Reformation in England and has promised us a return visit to speak on the French Revolution. Dominic McBride, head teach of St Thomas' Catholic Primary School spoke on the Distinctive Nature of Catholic Education.

In January members enjoyed a delicious Epiphany Lunch at the Franciscan International Study Centre and we are looking forward to returning there in July for our annual Garden Party when we will welcome Margaret Carter, the Diocesan President as our guest.

At the time of writing plans are underway to attend the UCM Diocesan Pilgrimage to Aylesford on Tuesday, 26th May.

Invitations are frequently received from other groups in the area and several members represented our Foundation at the Women's World Day of Prayer held this year in St Stephen's Church, Canterbury. Members attended the 60th Anniversary Party of Our Lady, Help of Christians Foundation, Folkestone and on 13th June, members will attend the birthday celebrations of St Peter's Foundation, Westgate.

Members continue to exercise their ministry of caring and at meetings there are regular updates on those members who are ill or housebound. Members are encouraged to maintain links with those members unable to attend meetings to let them know that they are still valued members of our confraternity and to keep them informed of forthcoming events. Special thanks are due to Canon Bunce, our spiritual advisor for his continued support.

Membership of the UCM provides fellowship and is open to all Catholic women, married or single, also non-Catholic wives of Catholic husbands and may be extended to other women who are in sympathy with its aims and objectives. We believe that we can give YOU something. We know that YOU can contribute so much.

Do join us at our meetings, you will be most welcome.

Mary McGeary
President

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

A big thank you to the team who have looked after Children's Liturgy this year. I am always impressed when I see what my colleagues are doing upstairs. This is our most important work, but please do not think it is taken for granted when you read the rest of this report. Praying the Word at the Eucharist with children is what we are here for.

However:

We have worked more and more closely with Saint Thomas' School this year, and ideas discussed over the last few years are gradually coming into being. When the Diocesan Inspectors visited the school they were pleased with this co-operation. For those families who can send their children to our school, this helps them feel that they belong to a big parish family.

The Harvest Mass in Autumn was one innovation, a grand celebration in Church and afterwards in the Hall. An Advent Service has now become an annual event, pointing the way to the Children's Mass on Christmas Day Morning. That evening Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds and Kings, in the shape of crib figures made by children and families of the parish, begin their pilgrimage through our community, to arrive in time for Christmas Day, then to stay in the Hall foyer to remind the people of the city of the first Christmas.

This Lent the children's Stations of the Cross were held on a Friday evening rather than a Sunday afternoon. Clearly this is a better time for families, so we will do the same again. Children's Services for Holy Week and Easter are now well-established and well-attended.

The next new venture will be a May Procession in Church in honour of Mary,

Jesus' mother and ours. The procession will visit a few 'stations' in the Church that are connected with Mary, and at each we will hear God's Word and meditate and pray. Once more this will be a Friday evening, 22nd May, just before half-term. As has become traditional, there will be a shared meal in the Hall afterwards.

The last celebration of the School year will be a picnic on 3rd July at the Franciscan International Study Centre, by kind invitation of Fr Philippe. On the calendar this was marked as the Feast of St Thomas the Apostle. Is that when it is celebrated in India? What can we do that day in honour of the Apostle of India?

We are carefully building up traditions for our children. None of the things we have brought in or that we have in mind are really daringly new, but we hope they are fresh. Just as we look forward to the first Kentish strawberries or family birthdays, we hope that the year will be marked by a series of little celebrations, weaving in and out of the Feasts of the Church's year, First Sacraments, and the Sundays when St Thomas' School lead our worship.

If you could help in any way, we would love to hear from you. And remember, Home is a Holy Place! The holiness of God in you families brims over into Church, so if your little ones are noisy or running up and down or embarrassing you in any way when you get here (five minutes late because a nappy needed changing), don't worry! Jesus asked for the children to be brought to him, even ours!

Maurice Billingsley

THE PARISH SCHOOLS ST ANSELMS.

The spiritual life at St Anselm's continues to flourish under the leadership of Ms Fiona Quilty, the head teacher.

There is a regular Friday morning Mass celebrated by one of the priests from the deanery. There are other liturgies during the course of the school year to mark the liturgical seasons and a huge amount of work and energy is put in to them by staff and pupils alike.

In November last year Bishop John commissioned some more sixth formers and staff to be extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. This was the second year that this has happened and it provides a great example and witness to the rest of the school.

The catholic ethos of the school continues to be strong and this is in no small measure due to the hard work of the head teacher and staff. Particular mention should be made to the work of the school chaplain and the RE Department. This hard work was acknowledged this year by the achievement of a 'good' RE Ofsted report with a 'outstanding' report on the work of the chaplaincy.

The highlight of this year must be the Mass for the 900th anniversary of St Anselm held at Canterbury Cathedral. The Mass was concelebrated by Bishop John with the priests of the deanery and was attended by the whole school. It took a huge amount of organisation with the pupils walking down to the cathedral from the school. The music, reading, serving,

indeed every aspect of the Mass went very well. It was a great celebration. I would like to thank the head of the RE Department, Mrs Gill Robinson, all the RE staff and Louise Perry, the chaplain, for their hard work and for the support they offer the clergy who into the school. As well as thanking all those who work so hard to plan and prepare the music and other things that go into a successful liturgy.

ST THOMAS' SCHOOL

No Report Received

SCRIPTURE GROUPS

Continues to be on Thursdays after mid-day Mass. We meet in the Upper Room and bring our own sandwiches, but tea, coffee and biscuits are provided. We read the following Sunday's liturgy, then have a discussion. All are welcome.

Finally a word of thanks to my fellow priests for all they have done and continue to do at St Anselm's: Fr Mark White, Fr James Sweeney, Fr Piet Wijngaard, Fr Peter Geldard, Fr Joe Feeley and Fr Jeff Cridland.

*Father Richard Hearn
School Chaplain*

For more information please contact either:
Patty Baxter 01227-462200 or
Sheila Schlarmann 01227-451903.
Thank You.

CHURCH CARERS

This year has seen some changes with people leaving and others joining our team. We miss Martin Pilarcik who used to do odd jobs and glass cleaning in the church. Martin has now returned to Slovakia. Fenela, who used to clean votive candle stands, no longer can do the job, so I am looking for someone to take her place. Jean Pegg lost her helper but thankfully Joyce Ainslie has stepped into the breach, helping to clean all brasses in the church. Recently Antionette Underwood has had to stand down from washing linen, as her husband is not well, so I am looking for someone to take on this job on a weekly basis. Jessica who is at Canterbury High School, comes in on Tuesdays and does odd jobs of cleaning and is now helping me with laundry,

unfortunately she will be returning with her family to Korea. I will miss her lovely personality, and thank her for all her help. Richard Sexton has done a good job on clearing out old rubbish and making the working sacristy decent at long last. My thanks go to our loyal fellow workers, as in Joan Crosland who dusts the church and cleans the water stoup. Janet Billingsley who launders the alter cloths, Miriam Mehlin who cleans the chalices, plus Jolanta who hoovers all carpets and stairs and upper room. I would like to thank each and everyone for their loyalty and commitment to the service of God in keeping his house in order.

*Tina Hamilton
Sacristan*

THE ECUMENICAL SOCIETY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

On 21st April 2008, Mr Richard Sexton spoke about started with the 4th century and the conversion of Constantine and its ensuing theological conflicts. Many of the problems that the crusaders faced related to these early - Christian conflicts. In the early part of the Middle Ages, the town was still under the Byzantine Empire.

On Saturday, 10th May 2008, the Canterbury Group visited St Andrew's Church, Deal. This was our 4th visit and it was good to meet up with old friends again. At noon there was Mass in the church and a magnificent lunch followed. We then filed back into the church to hear an address by Bishop Barnes. His theme was Mary, Star of the Sea. The local Mayor then joined us as it was time to process through the streets of Deal carrying a statue of Our Lady in a model boat. The Bishop and

Christian Jerusalem in the Middle Ages. He Vicar walked down to the edge of the sea and threw a wreath of flowers into the water. Back on the promenade, the Bishop ended the ceremony by blessing the sea and, of course, everyone present.

On Saturday, 17th May 2008, Barbara Markham and her brother went on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Caversham which is near Reading. The shrine is in the Church of Our Lady and St Anne. At noon, the Abbot of Douai, Dom Geoffrey Scott, celebrated Mass in the shrine chapel which is graced by a life-sized 500 year old statue of Our Lady. The coach took us back to Reading and the ruins of Reading Abbey. Here, we gathered in St James' Catholic Church, which is in the abbey grounds, for a

fascinating talk by Professor Brian Kemp on the history of the abbey.

In June 2008, our secretary, Sister Margaret Mary, resigned and retired to her native Ireland. We wish her many years yet to enjoy her well-earned rest.

On Wednesday, 10th September, 2008, Barbara Markham gave a talk on Our Lady and Spiritual Healing. Barbara mentioned how Our Lady often used water as a healing medium. She then went on to speak about healing in general.

Saturday, 20th September 2008, a visit to Westgate-on-Sea for three of our members who were invited to the consecration of Bishop Damien Mead, fellow member of our Canterbury branch. There were several visiting clergy present, including three bishops. The chief celebrant was Bishop Rommie Starks from the USA. There were also representatives from other denominations, including a Greek Orthodox priest, so we were truly ecumenical.

On Wednesday, 19th November 2008, Barbara Markham spoke about Life after Death. She started by using a recording of the chorister Andrew Johnston singing 'Tears of Heaven' and explained that the theme was to remind us that November is the month of the Holy Souls.

On Wednesday, 10th December 2008, Christopher Bull spoke about Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces. This was a very interesting and profound talk on what may be the 5th Marian

Dogma, i.e. that of Advocate, Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix. He emphasised that Mary's whole purpose is to help us get closer to her Son.

Wednesday, 25th March 2009, a Celebration of the Annunciation. Our day of celebration began at noon with Holy Mass, followed by the Rosary. We then trooped up to the hall for a buffet lunch and to view a life-sized statue of the Archangel Gabriel who looked very resplendent and all lit up with fairy lights. This statue had its origins in Marks & Spencer, being one of their manikins and was used recently in an exhibition of angels at St Mildred's Anglican Church.

As an addendum, I would like to thank all those members who make our meetings possible, especially our parish priest, Canon Bunce, who does all the printing, our Sacristan, Tina Hamilton, who organizes all the catering, our Caretaker, John Spillett, who prepares the hall for us not forgetting Brenda Lippert, our parish secretary, who does all the copying needed.

I would also like to mention the strong links which have been forged between St Thomas' Church and St Mildred's Church. Some of our members are also members of St Mildred's Senior Citizen Club and we look forward to more combined social gatherings in the future. There seems to be a genuine ecumenical spirit.

*Barbara Markham.
Treasurer ESBVM*

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN CANTERBURY

The AGM on 23rd April 2008, saw the Reverend Stephen Laird (University of Kent Chaplain) re elected as Acting Chairman of CTC. Much of the meeting was spent in small discussion groups considering possible projects and the long term hopes and goals of CTC. Despite the increasing success of Hope, initiated by the Baptist Church in 2007 and strongly supported by CTC to build good relationships, particularly with the young, through whom the gospel is enhanced across the city, there was still a feeling that Christian churches should be reaching out more to the young people of Canterbury. In addition various suggestions were proposed for Christian Unity week, e.g. panel discussions, focussing on the differences/similarities between the various Christian churches. Differences, however were absent on Good Friday, when many from the different churches joined the walk of witness, through the High street.

In October, we were all invited to the United Nations Association service of prayer for world peace in the Cathedral. The Lord

Mayor of Canterbury read the Preamble to the United Nations Charter and prayers were offered for the world. Towards the end of the autumn, Hope had a service of celebration in the Cathedral to which all Churches were invited, although several have been involved in co-ordinating prayer celebrations and mission events. Again the Lord Mayor was in attendance along with a relatively good gathering of young people.

Christian Unity week (18-25th January), went well again this year, although our service and lunch at St Thomas' at the end of the week was not as well attended as other years, possibly due to the stormy weather. About 35 attended, the majority of who were members of St Thomas' in comparison to 55 the year before. Nonetheless, the service, taken by Father Richard Hearn, was one of great hope for the work and lives of all Christians and everyone enjoyed the sit down lunch after and the talk given by a representative of Demelza Hospice Care for Children in Sittingbourne, for whom we raised £113.10. The help given by the UCM did not go unnoticed. The week

finished with the traditional Unity Service in the Cathedral on Sunday evening which was well attended. The guest speaker was the Rev Peter Owen Jones-vicar, television presenter es.

and writer and the service was completed by the beautiful music provided by various groups from the Canterbury churches and the Universiti

KENT COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS & JEWS

No Report Received

ALTAR SERVERS

We have a larger group of servers since last year who loyally serve on a Sunday. They look smart in their new cream albs and red cords. On Monday, 4th May, at a special Mass at Aylesford Priory, Bishop Paul Hendricks enrolled several of our servers as members of the Guild of St Stephen. They are now allowed to wear the Guild's distinctive medal. On behalf of all the priests I would like to

thank the servers for all that they do. As I have said before, we always need more servers, anyone male or female can serve as long as thy have received their First Holy Communion. There is no upper age limit! Just come along and join.

Father Richard Hearn

ST VINCENT DE PAUL (S.V.P.)

The St Thomas' Conference continues to meet fortnightly at which time we discuss, organise and develop our work with the aim of serving the needy of the Parish and beyond to the best of our ability. Our membership remains consistent and although we still do not have a President, the meetings continue to be chaired successfully by three experienced members in rotation. Our work at present involves our regular visits, visiting those referred to us by social services and other caring organisations and also helping many who have financial or other needs such as furniture or clothes for example. We also organise two main events during the year – the summer outing and the Christmas party.

We have one member still dedicated to visiting the homeless centre once a week. He continues to take fresh fruit and vegetables and his arrival is looked forward to immensely. Many of you will be aware that at one point last year the centre was on the verge of closing and this would have been disastrous for those who use its facilities. Fortunately the problems that existed were resolved and the centre remains open.

We had a welcome visit at one meeting from David Wiles, the Southwark Central Council Twinnage Officer, who informed us that he had seen for himself many projects that our money has helped to support over the years in India. At the present time we are providing financial help for one SVP Conference in India.

The SVP outing last July offered a coach tour of the south coast of Kent, which provided a reminder that our country had been in the front line for several past threats of foreign invasion.

From the Eastern Docks of Dover we went on to view the much neglected Western Heights. This is the hidden location of substantial army barracks, connected to ground level by the Grand Shaft and constructed to deal with a threat of foreign invasion by the army of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1804. We went on past the Shakespeare Cliff to Folkestone to view a Martello tower, also constructed at that time for defence and leading on to the contemporary Military Canal at Hythe. There was a reminder of World War II at the Museum of the Battle of Britain. Many members of the party were surprised at a brief visit to Samphire Hoe, a recent addition to the English coastline resulting from the excavation of the Channel Tunnel. After lunch at the village hall of St Mary's Bay we went on to Romney Marsh to visit the striking church of St Augustine with its wooden campanile and a damaged wall painting of the martyrdom of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. A final stop at Godmersham enabled us to view another memorial to Saint Thomas at the church of St Lawrence.

During the summer holidays we were able to finance two children's places on the St John Bosco holiday camp in Essex run by the SVP. The children were reported to have had a great time and we are hoping to repeat this experience for other children this summer.

The Christmas party was a truly happy and enjoyable occasion and was very well attended again. I am glad to say that we had a few more men joining us too, which always adds to the occasion! We are very grateful to Mike Lilford and the 9.30am band and choir and also to Audrey Matthews who played the accordion very kindly for us again.

We owe our thanks to Canon Bunce who is a great supporter of our work and allows us to have our monthly door collections, which raise between £300 - £450 each month, very pleasing, especially in the current economic climate. I am also happy to report that our running costs are small and the money is used for the purpose it is given. Brenda too is someone I would like to thank as she does so

much for us behind the scenes particularly around our two main events.

Last, but by no means least, thank you to all the Parishioners who support our collections and help us in many other ways as well, without you our job would be much harder.

*Colette Noble,
Secretary*

100 CLUB

We had the full 100 members this year so that we were able to have the full 25 draws of £20, plus there will be four lucky winners of £250 at the A.G.M.

As you know the 100 Club raises £1,000 every year for the parish and only costs £25 per ticket bought.

Due to loss of members during the year we need new parishioners to join, so please rejoin

and ask friends to join. Look for the membership form in the newsletter and return it to Brenda. Brenda handles the day to day running of the 100 Club and we thank her for that. Good Luck

*Ron Arcari
100 Club Organiser*

PARISH SAFEGUARDING

This has been a busy year, but I am pleased to report that in line with national policy, all existing volunteers in the parish have now completed a CRB check. My role in the parish has been given a new title (Safeguarding Representative), the Diocesan Child Protection Commission is now the Diocesan Safeguarding Commission, while the organisation previously known as COPCA is now the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS).

I have attended a training day for the new Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) which was planned to be introduced in October, 2009. Once this is introduced nationally, all parish volunteers must be registered. This register will confirm that there is no known reason why an individual should not work with children or vulnerable adults. The latest communication that I have received from CSAS is that:

“Vetting and Barring is a “once in a lifetime” registration that will be portable for any concurrent or consecutive role with vulnerable groups. It does not however remove the need to have CRB checks for various roles across different agencies. Duplicate CRB checks for all are still required if a person is a teacher, Trustee, Scout Leader and children’s liturgist, for example”.

CSAS explains that we will still need CRB disclosures since:

“VBS identifies those considered unsuitable to work with vulnerable groups; it does not indicate the suitability of a person to carry out a particular role. The CRB check will continue to provide full criminal record

information in order fully to determine if an individual is suitable for a specific post in the Church.”

Following VBS registration, changes to an individual’s status will be updated continually. (This is unlike CRB, which is only valid on the day of issue.)

Once the VBS is introduced, it will become a criminal offence for anyone to start working with a vulnerable group before registering with the scheme. Both the employer (parish priest) and the volunteer or employee are liable.

The Home Office announced in March that the VBS is now to be introduced in stages. All parishioners new to a role will need to register in July 2010, when a new amalgamated CRB and VBS registration form will come into operation. Then there will be a five year phasing strategy for existing volunteers and employees. Registration is free for volunteers.

Apart from the obvious benefit of portability and continuous updating that Vetting and Barring will bring, it will also help to make our parish a safer place. However, I am reminded at every training day that neither CRB nor VBS eliminate the need for continuous vigilance and awareness of issues of safeguarding. If at any time you feel that there may be a problem in the parish related to the protection of children or vulnerable adults, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Canon.

*Margaret Butchers
Parish Safeguarding Representative*

16th CANTERBURY (St Thomas) SCOUT GROUP
No Report Received

ST MARTIN'S HOSPITAL

At the time of our last report (May 2008), fewer people were attending the various services held in the hospital chapel at St Martin's. Eventually it became obvious that the services arranged as prayer services and Holy Communion services for R.C. patients had not been attended for many, many weeks. About this time in these proceedings our Extraordinary Minister, who visits St Martin's, suspended her visits (for health reasons). These resumed at the beginning of 2009 with the Blessed Sacrament being taken to any known R.C. patients who wish to receive. Talking with R.C. patients who don't wish to receive and talking with anyone who wishes to

talk. It is so heart-warming to see how pleased people are to receive Holy Communion. Thanks be to God.

This last year has not been the easiest of years, so the help and understanding of staff members, chaplaincy colleagues, Rev Peter Richmond and Shirley Smith has been much appreciated. As, too, has been the support, prayers and encouragement of Fr Richard Hearn. Thank you Father, you have been so helpful.

Jean Johnson
Chaplaincy Team Member, St Martin's
Hospital

**MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON
MONDAY 12th May 2008**

Present: Chris Bull (Chairman), Canon Michael Bunce, Father Richard Hearn, Deacon David Avery, members of the Parish Pastoral Council and parishioners.

1. **Opening Prayer.** Mass was **celebrated** at 7pm as the opening prayer of the meeting.
2. **Apologies for Absence** were received from Joan Crosland, Aldwyth Garside, Barbara Markham, Fr George Marsden, Jan and Brian Molloy, Sister Margaret Mary O'Grady, Roy Shersby and Cyril and Mary Scott.
3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 14th May, 2007.** That the minutes be accepted as a correct record. Proposed: Chris Smith. Seconded: Liz Rikh. Carried nem. Con.
4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes.** Canon Bunce reported that the recording of Father Tom Herbst's talks had been sporadic.
5. **Chairman's Report.** This had been published in the *Annual Report*, but Chris Bull pointed out that two or three lines had been omitted from the last paragraph. 'Please go on' should read: 'Please pay particular attention to the accounts. Baptisms occur on a regular basis, and so we go on'. Chris reminded us that Father Tom Herbst's series of talks on Vatican 2 would begin on Tuesday 20th May. He reported that the Archbishop was convalescing after a serious operation and that Bishop John Hine was the senior bishop in charge of the archdiocese.
6. **Finance Committee's Report.** Tim Levey presented the report, which was published in the *Annual Report* of the Parish Pastoral Council. Weekly collections had been very flat this year. Income from letting the hall was down almost 10%, whereas the cost of lighting and heating had risen almost 70%. In view of the relationship between income and expenditure the outlook inspired less confidence this year than last.
7. **Parish Priest's Report.** Canon Bunce thanked the Finance Advisory Committee for lightening the burden of responsibility and Brenda Lippert for looking after the day-to-day transactions of the parish. Next Sunday, Finance Weekend, it would be his turn to speak on financial matters at Mass. A blitz on sacrificial giving and Gift Aiders was needed. The public rooms in the presbytery had just been redecorated and last year the church, including the tower, had been made safe. We would now be able to ring the Angelus bell and a parishioner had offered to pay for an automatic ringer. The temporary lighting in the sanctuary was unsatisfactory; new lighting would require the approval of a Diocesan Commission. The interior of the church was waterproof but needed redecoration.

St Thomas' Shop was up and running, and Canon Bunce thanked Judith Roser for manning it on Fridays; in future he hoped there would be a full team to cover every day including Sunday. There was now a card machine. Restocking, the paying of bills etc had been reorganised and the shop helpers met monthly; Canon Bunce attended the meetings when possible.

Parish Schools and Societies: Canon Bunce praised St Thomas' wonderful schools, their head teachers and team leaders. He expressed his gratitude to many societies and individuals in the parish, including the SVP, the UCM, the Children's Liturgy Group, the Finance Advisory Committee, the Choirs, Readers, Sacristan, Cleaners and Clerical Team.

First Communions and Confirmation: There were 35 candidates in the First Communion Programme and 23 candidates for Confirmation.

Father Sylvester Onmoke: Canon Bunce hoped Father Sylvester would come this year (which would be his 8th at St Thomas'), but he had not yet heard from him. Father Sylvester had thanked us for having raised over £11,000 for his orphanage and two schools.

CRB checks: The Canon noted that some parishioners, especially Eucharistic Ministers, were exercised about the checks. Those who were not vetted would no longer be able to exercise their ministry. The role of Eucharistic ministers was to take communion to the sick and even if they only exercised their ministry at Mass they should be ready for all eventualities. Canon Bunce thanked Margaret Butchers, the Child Protection Representative, for having offered to undertake this gargantuan task. He asked Margaret how it was progressing; Margaret said she had done about 40 checks and there were 30 still outstanding. Canon Bunce said he did not want to lose people and he urged the reluctant to submit to the procedure.

Staff: Canon Bunce thanked John Spillett, Wendy Miller and Brenda Lippert for their valuable and much appreciated contribution to the life of the parish.
8. **Any Other Business:** Ron Arcari presented Canon Bunce with a cheque for £1,000 from the proceeds of the 100 Club. Four members won prizes of £250 each in the draw: Elizabeth Simpson (58), Althea Nesbitt (18), Marie Strong (84) and Elizabeth Murphy (82).

9. **Closing Prayer:** Fr Richard Hearn led the closing prayer. Refreshments were served.

**Agenda for the A.G.M.
Monday, 1st June 2009**

1. Opening Prayer (Mass at 7.00 p.m.)
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Minutes of the last AGM
4. Matters Arising not on the Agenda
5. Chairman's Report
6. Parish Priest's Report
7. Any Other Business (already tabled)
8. 100 Club Draw
9. Closing Prayer
10. Light refreshments

NOTES

In order to keep this Annual Report as short as possible, it has been necessary in some cases to shorten or edit articles.

If you have Any Other Business you wish to have tabled, then please let Brenda, the Parish Secretary, have these by Friday, 29th May 2009 at the very latest.