

**Report of the Chairman of the Parish
Pastoral Council for 2010 – 2011**

It was on 6th December, that we were informed of the retirement of Kevin McDonald from his position of Archbishop due to ill-health. He had asked Rome to relieve him of his duties and Rome accepted. We thank him for his six years hard work for the diocese. He succeeded to the Metropolitan See of Southwark on 8th December, 2003. He had previously been Bishop of the Diocese of Northampton. The position is now *Sede Vacante* and we await developments.

All services during August will be held in the hall as the Church undergoes its 'Restoration'. New lights are being installed and the church completely redecorated. The cost of this is being funded by a special 'Restoration Fund' and the generous contributions received so far means we have every reason to believe the target figure will be reached.

The new English translation of the Missal is now well under way although it may not come into use until next year. Some will like the changes, some will not. Which do you prefer, 'And also with you' or, 'And with your spirit'? For more details you can go to www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org You can also give your own views about this matter on this website.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable events took place on Sunday, 27th December. Annie O'Dea collapsed and died in the Church before the 8am Mass. We were all shocked and Mass was delayed by 20 minutes. But we soon realised what a lovely way to go to the Lord...in the House of the Lord! Her lovely smile is now looking down on us from above.

In the narthex of the Church is a visitor's book and at the end of June someone wrote, 'Please-I come- Pray- my Country' signed by someone from Tehran. Like many he found the peace and quiet in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament conducive to prayer and so prayed for that sad and troubled country.

Fr Richard has been appointed Chaplain to HM Prison Elmley on the Isle of Sheppey but has delayed taking up his appointment until his replacement arrives or/and Fr Sylvester comes in June.

Fr Tom Herbst has almost recovered from a stroke he suffered in September, so much so that he was able to give a series of talks on Franciscan Spirituality and will give some on St Luke's Gospel when the weather is warmer. He also celebrates the 6pm Mass on Sundays. Deacon David still is active in the Prayer Group and takes the Baptisms among other things. All of this takes place under the

watchful and unflappable care of Canon Bunce. A sincere thank you to all of them.

Chris Bull – Chairman PPC

PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT

I shall begin my annual Report on the material front – the plans for new lighting and a complete redecoration of the church building. Since last September we have raised almost £40,000 towards the total cost for the project (£55,000). This has been a marvellous response, and I am more than grateful for the way parishioners have responded to the appeal. Thank you.

During the work the church will be closed completely. I have to say that this was a difficult decision. However, having made it, we can now reduce the total cost considerably and shorten the time the work will take (4-5 weeks). If that decision had not been made, then the work would have had to stop and start with a lot of clearing up at the end of each stop so as to allow Mass or another Service to take place – hence the longer time for the work and the added expense.

The logistics of having Mass and Reconciliation in the Hall are considerable, but, with a bit of ingenuity, we can do it, I'm sure. Fortunately, there will be light at the end of the tunnel, despite all the inconvenience.

Moving on to other matters, you know, of course, that Father Richard will be leaving us – when, we don't know for sure. He has been appointed Catholic Chaplain in Elmley Prison on the Isle of Sheppey. Until he can find suitable accommodation he will continue to live in the Presbytery which, fortunately, is large enough for him, a summer supply priest, Deacon Philip Smith and myself. Deacon Philip will be with us in Canterbury on what is called an Extended Pastoral Placement (EPP). As valuable as it will be having a Transient Deacon in our midst (a Transient Deacon is one who will eventually be ordained to the Priesthood), that is not quite the same as having a priest-replacement for Father Richard. At the moment of writing I've no idea who that will be – but be assured there will be one! Gone are the days when there are so many priests that quite a few parishes had three, sometimes even four, Assistants. Nowadays, I can think of no parish in the Archdiocese which has more than two. Many parishes, of course, are 'one-man-bands'. That, naturally, brings up the need for continual prayer being offered up for more and more vocations. I mentioned a summer supply priest. Father Sylvester is willing to come

across for three months (June, July and August). The nature of his work certainly allows for this (he lectures in and is chaplain to a Teachers' Training College which is shut during those months), but (and it is a big BUT) his bishop for some unknown reason is unwilling to let him come for more than six weeks. So, the whole situation is up in the air at the moment and unresolved.

With relatively fewer priests, the pattern in the future has to be greater collaborative ministry – priest, deacon and people. In St Thomas' that idea is not a new one. We already have many parishioners involved in the various ministries in the parish. I see my task more and more as fostering and encouraging collaboration in those areas of parish life where it is not only possible but desirable.

Canon Michael Bunce – Parish Priest

CANTERBURY PRISON

Well, it's been quite a busy year in the prison, as it always is. Naturally, the day-to-day work of the Catholic 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.

Canterbury Prison is a unique institution, it being just one of a small handful of prisons dedicated to working with Foreign Nationals. We have men from well over forty countries speaking more or less that number of languages. Our 'welcome' leaflet which we hand to prisoners on their arrival has been produced in about thirty different languages. We are still working on Albanian, Arabic and several other languages!

The whole thrust of our work is inter-faith. It has to be. We have men who follow most of the world's religions. The largest groups are the Catholics and the Muslims, followed by other Christian faiths, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. There are twelve Chaplains representing all the major faiths in the world. How do we get on? Famously, is the answer! There is no rivalry. Every Chaplain feels secure in his or her own faith without in any way feeling threatened or compromised. It is a model of collaboration and partnership we try to convey to the 318 men in the prison and, even more importantly, which we hope they will carry to their home country when *they* are released. Wouldn't the world be a different place if our vision took a firm hold?

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 we have 36 children in the Programme, far more than last year when we had 24. I have a team of five catechists, four of whom take the children in four classes of nine children and the fifth helping me with the instruction of the parents. I say 'instruction' because the parents are strongly encouraged to work at home with the children, and our task with the parents is to give the parents the background to what their children are being taught. We always end the parents' session with a short liturgy (a reading, a reflection and a blessing). The children use a book called 'I Belong' published by *Redemptorist Publications*. We have found over the years that this is about the very best preparation book on the market. It is lively, informative and never dull.

As well as the children's classes, several liturgies are incorporated into the Preparation Programme. Arguably, the highlight is the Children's Passover Meal which we celebrate on Maundy Thursday morning. We have a real meal (lamb, bitter herbs, honey, unleavened bread and so on), just as the Lord would have had at the Last Supper which was, of course, a Passover Meal. The whole liturgy lasts about one hour, and I don't think I've ever been with children that long without a single yawn or fidget. They are totally engrossed. What better introduction is there to the Mass than re-enacting the Last Supper of the Lord?

*Canon Michael Bunce
Catechetical Team Co-ordinator*

CONFIRMATION

The Confirmation Preparation Programme is underway having started in March with an away day at Minster Abbey. We have an enthusiastic group of 24 young people ranging in age from 12 to 18, preparing to receive the sacrament. Bishop John will be administering Confirmation on Sunday, 20th June at 11am. I am grateful to Louise, Philip, Robert and Peter for their work and support as catechists.

Father Richard Hearn

KENT & CANTERBURY HOSPITAL

I visit the hospital, usually once a week, on a routine visit and together with our team of Extraordinary Ministers ensure that Holy Communion is taken to the patients on Sundays and at other times during the week. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our

hospital ministers for all the work they do and express my appreciation for the support they give me.

As I have noted before, there are times when it appears that there are no Catholic patients in the Kent and Canterbury Hospital at all. This is of course unlikely, but the only way we have of knowing who is in the hospital is if we are told by the patient, a relative or friend. It is therefore vital that if you are going in to hospital you let us know and if you end up there unexpectedly that 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 chaplaincy volunteers who do sterling work in ensuring every ward is visited during the course of the week.

*Father Richard Hearn
Hospital Chaplain*

THE SOLITUDE GROUP

The Gospel on the first Sunday of Lent was a reminder that we need to take time out to pray and the Solitude Group provides an opportunity to do this. We continue to meet in the morning of the 3rd Saturday of every month in the peaceful environment of Greyfriars Chapel in Stour Street.

2010 is our 10th Anniversary year. In January we were delighted to welcome Fr Andre Cirino OFM, as it is on a chapter in his book *Franciscan Solitude* that this group is based. In March we went on retreat to Ladywell in Surrey, led by Sr Patricia Jordan FSM using her book, *An Affair of the Heart*.

In addition, the Parish Prayer board is looked after by one of our Group. We helped with refreshments following the Sunday Evening Mass in October, that welcomed new students to the Parish. Also, as we are ecumenical and to show our gratitude to the Brothers at Greyfriars, we assist in welcoming visitors to Greyfriars Chapel during the spring and summer.

For anyone who is interested in joining us, more information including contact details, is displayed in the church foyer.

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

I am glad to write my first annual report as Director of Music at St Thomas of Canterbury. I would like to thank my predecessors, Helen Natrass and Roberta Johnson for their work and am most glad of their continuing support.

I have inherited a capable and energetic choir who embrace a wide range of musical styles in their support of the liturgy. Some new members have joined and more are always welcome. We have begun to sing regular Vespers and continue to sing other parts of the office at different times of the year and have been invited to sing in London for the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and in Lancashire later this year, for the Congress of the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, where we will sing mass at Lancaster Cathedral and Vespers at the shrine of Our Lady in Fernyhalgh. The choir has continued to sing a Gregorian Chant Mass on the first Sunday of each month.

You may have noticed the choir in different places during Mass and other services and there are now congregational mass sheets supplied. Feedback from the congregation on these experiments is always welcome.

The Solemn Vespers for St Thomas in the Cathedral on 29th December, gave welcome opportunity to work with the other musical talents of the parish and we were also joined by St Dunstan's Choir, a favour we can repay

in the summer. However, it was during the Triduum that I saw the exceptional talent of the parish in varied liturgical music making and I had great pleasure in directing the Grand Choir and ensemble for the Vigil. I hope that Mass in the Cathedral this summer offers an opportunity to reassemble and develop this group.

It has been a pleasure to acquaint myself with the parish organ although there are frequent moments where it has suffered from a lack of wind or indeed too much in the wrong places at the wrong times! As an old instrument this problem will need attention in the future.

It has been proposed and I aim to curate a musical festival for the Feast of the Translation this year, details to follow.

Finally, I will begin work in earnest this term on establishing a Youth Choir of St Thomas of Canterbury. This choir will sing at the 9.30am and 11am Masses. In the first instance I will audition Key Stage 2 children although any interest from other young people will be most welcome.

Ben Saul

UNION OF CATHOLIC MOTHERS

With a paid up membership of 36, an average of 22 members continue to meet in the Upper Room twice monthly at 1pm. On the second Monday we attend the 12 noon Mass, which is offered for our intentions. On the fourth Monday we have enjoyed various really interesting 'home grown' speakers, to whom we are very grateful, or we have other activities, or go on outings.

(If any parishioner has an interesting topic they could talk to us about, please get in touch).

During the past year, we have been busy as usual. In May we took part in the Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Aylesford, where we were very pleased that Canon Bunce concelebrated Mass with Bishop Hine. In July we went to the Franciscan International Study Centre where Canon celebrated Mass for us, during which four new members were enrolled and the rest of us renewed our commitment. This was followed by a delicious buffet lunch. Later in July, we went on an outing to the shrine of St Jude in Faversham and a visit to Brogdale for shopping and afternoon tea. In October we led the Holy Hour, specially praying, during this Year of the Priest, for past and present Priests of the Parish; we hosted the UCM Mass and Kent Area Meeting and also helped with refreshments at the Welcome to Students Evening. In November we had a sale of handmade cards to raise funds for the Hospice. We also support our own UCM charities. In

December we enjoyed our own party in the church hall. We celebrated the New Year with a lunch at the FISC when we were able to present Canon with a cheque for the Restoration Fund. In February we led the Stations of the Cross, with a Meditation used ecumenically at Walsingham.

We take part in ecumenical activities in Canterbury, where friendships are made with people in other churches. Some of our members regularly attend lunch or friendship clubs at the Baptist Church, the Salvation Army and St Mildred's. We accepted invitations to the Parish of St Martin and St Paul for 'A Celebration and Reflection for Harvest' followed by a delicious lunch, and to St Peter's Methodist Church for their Rally Service, followed by tea and cakes.

One of our members is St Thomas' Representative on the Women's World Day of Prayer Committee. We took part in services at St Dunstan's Church in the morning and St Michael's, Harbledown, in the evening.

Next year St Thomas' is hosting the evening service on Friday, 4th March, at 7pm and we look for support from all the people of the Parish.

The National newspaper 'The Catholic Mother', full of interesting and educational articles, can be found in the church porch. Our programme is also posted there.

We invite any ladies (even gentlemen), married or single, young or old, interested in taking part in our pleasurable activities to come along to share the fun, friendship, prayer, care, love and support which we experience. You will be very welcome

Marjery Craig
President

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

For this year's report we offer some extracts from Pope Paul VI's Directory on Masses with children. This official church policy document is the basis for all our children's Masses as well as the children's liturgy that takes place in the upper room. The numbers refer to paragraph numbers in Paul VI's paper.

We hope this shows that we endeavour to be faithful to the wishes of the whole Church while allowing our children to participate in the Eucharist as fully as possible.

29. Each Eucharistic celebration with children should be carefully prepared beforehand, especially with regard to the prayers, songs, readings, and intentions of the general intercessions. This should be done in discussion with the adults and with the children who will have a special ministry in these Masses.

31. To facilitate the children's participation in singing the *Gloria, Credo, Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*, it is permissible to use with the melodies appropriate vernacular texts, accepted by competent authority, even if these do not correspond exactly to the liturgical texts.

32. The use of musical instruments can add a great deal in Masses with children, especially if they are played by the children themselves.

33. In view of the nature of the liturgy as an activity of the entire person and in view of the psychology of children, participation by means of gestures and posture should be strongly encouraged in Masses with children.

42. If three or even two readings appointed can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the gospel should never be omitted.

43. If all the readings... seem to be unsuited to the capacity of the children, it is permissible to choose ... a reading from the bible. If... it seems necessary to omit one or other verse of biblical reading, this should be done cautiously and in such a way "that the meaning of the text or the intent and, as it were style of the Scriptures are not distorted".

47. All the elements that will help to explain the readings should be given great consideration so that the children may make the biblical readings their own and may come more and more to appreciate the value of God's word.

48. Sometimes the homily intended for children should become a dialogue with them.

52. The Eucharistic prayer is... the high point of the entire celebration. Much depends on the manner in which the priest proclaims this prayer and on the way the children take part by listening and making their acclamations.

*Maurice Billingsley
Children's Liturgy Team*

ST ANSELM'S SCHOOL

The regular spiritual life of the school continues with the Friday morning Mass celebrated by one of the priests from the deanery, as well as other liturgies held to mark the liturgical seasons. All of these involve a great deal of work on the part of staff and pupils alike.

Once again some staff and sixth formers were trained to become extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. They are commissioned by Bishop John at one of the Friday morning Masses.

It is always a delight to visit St Anselm's and 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 warm welcome. Whenever there is a Mass or other liturgy, a great deal of hard work goes in to preparing music, readings and drama and I would like to thank all those who take part.

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

*Father Richard Hearn
School Chaplain*

ST THOMAS' SCHOOL

No Report Received

READERS

If you are interested in reading at Sunday Mass, please telephone Mrs Brenda Lippert, the parish secretary on 462896. She will put you in touch with the contact person for your Mass.

Lesley Smith

CHURCH CARERS

I am very pleased to report that all my loyal cleaners turn up faithfully each week and take pride in keeping our beautiful church clean. They know who they are, so I will not mention individual names, as to keep this report short. Thank you to each and every one of you for your loyalty and support.

*Tina Hamilton
Sacristan*

THE ECUMENICAL SOCIETY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

9th May 2009: we listened to a talk by Canon Martin Warner of Walsingham, followed by a procession of Our Lady's statue through the Deal. The procession reached the promenade and after a short service, the sea was duly blessed and a wreath of flowers was tossed into the waves.

13th June 2009: we were invited to the East Kent Annual Festival of the Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary as our Chairman, Fr Stanley Evans, is its Chaplain. The festival was held in Holy Trinity Church, Broadstairs, and familiar to our group as we visited it in 2002 to see the famous statue of Our Lady of Bradstow.

6th July 2009: we were once more at St Andrew's Church, Deal, to take part in the Deal Festival of Music and Art, including the Cambrini Ensemble. Lunch over, we then returned to the church to view the 20 paintings

called Mysteries of the Rosary by Pierre Joncret of St Omer.

9th September: we met in St Thomas' Hall for a celebration of Our Lady's birthday. Deacon David blessed the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes which Susan Shaw had dressed for the occasion – the theme of the meeting being healing. I reminded those present that it was exactly a year ago when we started our Healing Register and over the last 12 months, 103 names were added to the list. Of these, 17 were removed as having been cured and 10 have died. During the meeting we sang hymns to Our Lady and the celebrations ended with the cutting and eating of the birthday cake, a huge chocolate confection.

10th October: a coach load of pilgrims left Canterbury for Aylesford Priory to venerate the relics of St Therese of Lisieux. This pilgrimage was arranged by the ESBVM and was a truly ecumenical event. As a result, we had a good representation of other denominations and were able to fill a 49 seater coach. Arriving at the Priory there was a Gathering Service at 11am followed by Mass at 11.30am. Archbishop Kevin McDonald officiated at the Mass and the relics of St Therese were placed in the sanctuary

9th September 2009: I gave a talk on the Prophecies of Isaiah.

*Barbara Markham.
ESBVM – Canterbury Branch*

ALTAR SERVERS

The number of Altar Servers has fallen last year and it is unfortunate that three out of the five Sunday Masses have no servers. It has always been difficult to recruit and keep servers in Canterbury. We would dearly like to have more servers as long as they have received their First Holy Communion. There is no upper age limit! Just come along and join.

To the small loyal band of servers that we do have, I would like to say a big thank you and keep up the good work, we need you.

Father Richard Hearn

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

From September 2009 to September 2010 the SVP marks the 350th anniversary of the deaths of its patrons St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac. The Vincentian family and the rest of the Church throughout the world remember their good work. They remain great examples of charity in the service of the poor. Our Society seeks to follow their example.

The St Thomas' Conference continues with its normal 'works' – regular visiting, helping

individuals in immediate financial, material or emotional need and organising our two main annual events – the summer outing and the Christmas party. We remain committed to the SVP twinnage scheme and support two Conferences in India. This Christmas the SVP nationally supported an appeal for Sudan. This was a very successful appeal and many people from the parish gave it their support.

As you may remember from previous years we have had one member dedicated to visiting the Shrine centre weekly. The centre is now only open during the day with no overnight sleeping facilities. We hope to continue with these links but to also extend our hand of friendship to Porchlight, which is a charity passionate about helping people and communities and which strives to make homelessness and poverty a thing of the past.

During the summer we were able to pay for two children's places at the St John Bosco summer camp run by the SVP. This is something we have been able to do for a few years now.

Our summer outing took a full coach of guests to Aylesford Priory for the day and all had a lovely time. This year the invitation was extended to St Mildred's church and they were very pleased to be included. Father George said Mass and we enjoyed a delicious buffet, which was organised by Tina who as always did a brilliant job.

The Christmas party was held in the church hall and was also a great success. A magician 'worked' the tables while the food was served and his tricks kept everyone on their toes! We are very grateful to Mike Lilford and the 9.30am choir who give up their time to sing carols for us every year. Also our thanks to Phil and Louise Gascoyne who entertained everyone with their musical skills.

In between our two main events alongside our visits we also help those referred to us by social services and other caring agencies. Over the past year we have been able to provide the following items:

Beds for two families.

New clothes and money for travel for several families.

Paint and carpeting.

Rail fare for family in great need of a holiday.

Furniture for gentleman moving into an unfurnished flat and money to replace furniture for a family who lost every thing in a house fire.

Money for food and utility bills.

We also give help financially when asked to other Conferences within the East Kent District when they have large financial requests.

It is important to stress that we would not be able to do any of this without the fantastic support from the Parish we receive through the monthly Door Collections. These collections generate between £300 and £350 each time, so thank you to all those who support our work in this way.

*Colette Noble,
Secretary*

100 CLUB

Once again we were fortunate enough to have the full 100 members, which enables us to have the full 25 draws of £20, plus 4 winners of £250 at the A.G.M.

The 100 Club raises £1,000 every year for the parish and costs only £25 per annum.

Please, please do join/rejoin by filling out the application form at the back of the newsletter or picking up a form from the back of the church. Good Luck.

*Ron Arcari
100 Club Organiser*

PARISH SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding work in the parish this year has continued through the administration of CRB checks and the parish has benefited from new volunteers in various ministries. In the last 12 months nine new volunteers have been active in the parish. In addition, several people are awaiting completion of the CRB process so that they can begin a new role. If you are considering becoming a volunteer, it is worth noting that the CRB process can take around two months, so you need to apply well in advance of taking up your position. You cannot begin your role until the parish has received a successful CRB clearance. The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Helen Sheppard, continues to give advice and guidance in safe practice and the diocese co-operates fully with CSAS, the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service, which aims to help the Church become an example of best practice in the Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, and develop a 'culture of vigilance' to ensure that children and vulnerable adults in our care are kept safe from harm.

The introduction of the new Vetting and Barring Scheme will give us increased confidence in the safety of our parish, enabling us all to know that vulnerable people will feel secure in the knowledge that they are cared for in their community and their needs are paramount. The scheme is scheduled to begin in July this year for new volunteers (delayed from last October). For existing volunteers,

the Diocese will introduce the scheme gradually over five years.

The new scheme will be far more proactive than the current process. For the first time, conviction and intelligence information held by the police about individuals will be continuously updated to see if the individual should be barred from working with vulnerable groups. When the new scheme is fully rolled out it will be illegal to work with children and vulnerable adults if you have not registered with the independent Safeguarding Authority. The Safeguarding of children and the vulnerable in the parish is a task not only for designated volunteers, but for us all. If you have any concerns at any time, please contact me or the Canon.

*Margaret Butchers
Parish Safeguarding Representative*

16th CANTERBURY (St Thomas) SCOUT GROUP

Our Group remains firmly established as one of the most active and largest Groups in the District. We have retained most of our adult Leaders but are always on the lookout for anyone who might be prepared to help in any of the Sections. We are also lucky in that some of the older Explorer Scouts help out in the various sections and sometimes continue as new adult Leaders when they reach their 18th birthday. This maintains an excellent level of continuity for the Group.

St George's Day Parade starts the summer term when the Group parades through the town as part of the local District followed by a service of renewal of promises at the Cathedral. We benefit from a large turn-out and look an impressive Group on the day. The Cubs were also involved in leading the singing in the Cathedral for one of the hymns. The spring is also the start of the camping season with the Scouts having a training camp at Whitsun and the older Cubs taking part in the District Sixer camp in June. The Beavers also took part in an overnight sleepover in late June. This latter event is a kind of taster towards the full camping undertaken by the Cubs and Scouts and involves an overnight stay in the hut at Ross Wood, but with the Beavers actually sleeping in small 'pop-up' tents erected in the hall itself. With lots of activities including making 'alka seltzer' rockets, they have a great time.

Annual camps take place at the start of the summer holidays. The Cub's camp involved many activities including the old favourite of fire lighting and cooking sausages, toasted buns and making a rock cake. This latter activity was followed by a traditional campfire

before the stay was over. The camp was blessed with good weather, which is always a lovely bonus!

The Scouts and Explorers followed for a full week with plenty of planned adventurous activities, which gave them an enjoyable and challenging week. With a patrol cooking competition and sailing at Dover, there was plenty both to do and to keep everyone fully occupied and interested. The cooking competition requires the patrol to devise a suitable menu, go shopping with a limited budget, prepare a full three-course meal and serve it attractively. The District Commissioner, Paul, came to judge and sample the individual patrol offerings and the overall standard was extremely high.

We combine our AGM with a fireworks night up at the Ross Wood camping site which encouraged many of our parents to come and enjoy themselves with simple food and a good firework display. The end of the year is also the time for the District annual fun swimming gala where we came second against a very strong team from the 14th Canterbury.

The Christmas period started with the Advent Church Parade. Christmas is a busy time with fund raising activities and a Group outing to the Marlowe arena to see the pantomime 'Peter Pan'. The Beavers finished the term with a 'carols and readings' event. The Cubs and Scouts combined to have a 'Country and Western' evening complete with callers for dancing and appropriate food!

In the New Year, our support committee arranged the second 'family quiz' evening with excellent participation by all families from the Group. This kind of activity helps to keep the whole organisation running smoothly and well. We are always very much appreciative of the support given by the Church which enables us to safely store equipment and provides us with an excellent base for scouting activities up in the Parish Hall.

Scouting provides the opportunity for our young people to face challenges and develop skills for future life. Taking part in open-air activities with a strong emphasis on teamwork and mixing provides that base for the well-rounded development of our youngsters. Examples from this last year have been the achievement of some of our older Cubs in completing their part of the 'Chief Scouts Award'. This is the ultimate badge they can obtain in the Cub Section and emphasises their commitment to the ethos of the Scouting movement. In the Scout section, a District competition to find four representatives to attend the 2011 World Jamboree resulted in

three of our young people being selected to have this honour.

Alan J. Ross
Group Scout Leader

POLISH COMMUNITY GROUP

All activities of the Polish community at St Thomas' in 2009/10 were organised by the committee of the Polish Association in Kent (PAK).

PAK was established in 1984 by a group of Polish residents of Kent, lead by Mr M. Turlo. Before Poland joined the EU its purpose was mainly social, particularly to maintain the Polish language and culture. After 2004, however, its profile changed as many Poles arrived in Kent with a little knowledge of the English language and British customs and traditions. Therefore, our mission today is not only to maintain our traditions and language, but also active involvement in the life of the local community.

PAK has no specific meeting venue. We communicate via our website www.polskakent.org launched in June 2009, and a newsletter which can be found in the PAK box in the church porch. We prepare the readings and hymns for the Polish Mass on the first Sunday of the month at 4pm. Father Krzysztof Kukulka who studies for his PhD at the Franciscan Study Centre has kindly agreed to say Mass for us. In the event of his absence, we arrange for another Polish priest from London or wherever we can find him, as it happened in July and August 2009. We meet in the Upper Room after Mass for a cup of tea/coffee and shared snacks.

On Palm Sunday 2009, we held our AGM in the hall where the new PAK committee was established. Father Krzysztof Kukulka kindly agreed to bless the food for Easter as it is the popular Polish custom. This Palm Sunday, we are grateful to Canon Bunce who kindly supported us in the absence of Father Krzysztof.

On 8th November, GM was held to celebrate the 25th anniversary of PAK. We watched a poignant presentation based on video recording from the first PAK meeting.

Beginning with Easter Sunday, we try to re-establish a group for singing at the Mass. Hopefully, we get lots of supporters (and one more guitar amplifier).

Finally, a word of thanks to Brenda for her support.

Marta Gocek,
Chair

www.polskakent.org info@polskakent.org

St Thomas' Shop

I am writing this short report at the very end because I suddenly realised that we've never heard a word about the Shop before in this report! What an omission!

Our Shop is staffed by volunteers who give of their time and talents freely and generously. My gratitude goes to them all. Sometimes, because of illness, it's been difficult to staff the shop. Brenda has been a fantastic help dropping what she's doing in the office and dashing around the corner to serve customers. We are always in need of more Volunteers. So, if you feel you may be able to offer to help then please see me, although it may transpire that your talents are better suited to other areas of parish life.

I meet regularly with all the Shop Volunteers. I try to remind everyone that at our meetings that working in the Shop is not just a 'job' selling things: it is a ministry. For some people visiting the Shop the face in the Shop is the face of the Church. During the past two years or so much work has been done to liven up the shop's appearance and to bring it into the 21st century. We now have a welcoming and friendly facility. We should all be proud of it.

Canon Michael Bunce

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON MONDAY 1st June, 2009

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 Father George Marsden, Roy Shersby, Jonathan and Margaret Butchers, Barbara Markham and Marjery Craig.
3. **Minutes of the AGM held on 1st June, 2009.** That the minutes be accepted as a correct record. Proposed: Father Richard Hearn. Seconded: Fran Connellan. Carried unopposed.
4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes not on the Agenda.** Canon Bunce said that the shop now had a full team of volunteers and was a great financial success.
5. **Chairman's Report.** Chris Bull referred us to the Annual Report, adding that since his report had been published a new flower bed had appeared in the garden in front of the church. He emphasised the convenience of the path across the grass which had resulted from a complaint by Father Richard Hearn. Canon Bunce added that the Council had thought they

owned the old railings so they had put in new ones.

6. **Parish Priest's Report.** Canon Bunce concentrated on the work that needed to be carried out in the church. New lighting was essential as the existing lighting was unsatisfactory and both difficult and expensive to maintain. Mike Lilford had put up a display of photographs of the proposed new arrangements and he distributed pamphlets outlining the details and the costs involved. The new lights would reduce the consumption of electricity by between a quarter and a third. There would be a soft start electrical control which would reduce wear and tear on the lights and make it possible to dim them when required. Energy-saving light bulbs would be used. The existing electric cables would need to be extended downwards so this would be an ideal time to redecorate the church. There had been a quotation of approximately £25,000 for the work on the lighting and a further £25,000 for redecoration; including the scaffolding, the total cost would be about £55,000. This could be broken down into small chunks so that parishioners could pay for particular items. Canon Bunce proposed shutting the church for about four weeks from mid-August 2010 to allow the work to proceed with celerity. Mass and baptisms would be celebrated in the hall; Father Philippe Yates would be asked if funerals could be held at the Franciscan Centre; there would be no weddings. Canon Bunce took the feeling of the meeting about the proposed arrangements and everyone approved. The Canon pointed out that we had fourteen months to raise the money. The meeting was positive and enthusiastic about this. Canon Bunce asked us to think of ideas for fundraising and to be prepared to take responsibility for implementing them. Turning to the subject of the long awaited electronic bell (donated by a parishioner), Mike Lilford said it would soon be installed in the belfry, which had now been made safe. In conclusion, Canon Bunce thanked Brenda, Wendy and John for their contribution to the presbytery and the parish. Chris Bull thanked Canon Bunce and the Finance Committee.
7. **Any Other Business (already tabled).** Brian and Jan Molloy had raised the subject of the welcome ministry. Brian

asked if anyone were in overall charge; the answer was no, except ultimately for the priests. Nick Tomaszewski suggested that there should be a team. Father Richard Hearn would organise a meeting for all ministries. Maurice Billingsley thought that this should be developed into a parish forum in which every organisation and ministry would present what it did. There might be input by the Franciscans at some point.

8. **100 Club Draw.** Canon Bunce had already been given a cheque for £1,000 for the parish. Four members won prizes of £250 each in the draw: John Spillett (43), Father Richard Hearn (64), Brian George (19) and Phillipa Burniston (95).
9. **Closing Prayer:** was led by Father Richard Hearn.
10. **Light Refreshments,** originally distributed before the meeting, were still available if desired.

**Agenda for the A.G.M.
Monday, 10th May, 2010.**

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, 7th May 2010 at the very latest.