

Weybridge Deanery Newsletter

No.4



Parishes in the Deanery

- Christ the Prince of Peace, Weybridge
- The Holy Family, Addlestone
- St. Anne's, Chertsey
- Sacred Heart, Cobham
- The Parish of St. Cuthbert, Egham (Englefield Green and Egham Hythe)
- The Holy Name, Esher
- All Saints, Hersham
- St. Barnabas, Molesey
- The Sacred Heart, Sunningdale
- Our Lady of Lourdes, Thames Ditton
- St. Erconwald, Walton on Thames
- Catholic Chaplaincy to Royal Holloway, University of London

Religious Communities

- Comboni Missionaries (Verona Fathers)
- Company of Mary
- Hospitaller Sisters of the Sacred Heart
- The Josephites
- St. Patrick's Missionary Society
- Salesians of Don Bosco
- Sisters of the Christian Retreat

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The Word Who Is Life



At the beginning of last month Bishop Richard calling together the clergy plus two lay representatives from each parish in our deanery. He came to share with us the first stage of a process intended to remodel and redirect our mission in our part of Surrey. That gathering marked the beginning of a bigger conversation about how in the twenty-first century we can continue (to quote the late and much-mourned Cardinal Cormac) *“to be Christ in our world, a communion of love, partners in service and a source of hope for all.”*

The title Bishop Richard has chosen for this process is itself significant: *The Word Who Is Life*. It's about a person, Jesus Christ; a person we are each called to encounter personally, not as a dead teacher of ideas but as a living Shepherd and Guide or, as St. Thomas put it, *“My Lord and my God.”* That Word gives new life, if we let him dwell in our hearts and take root in our lives. And that Word is entrusted to us for sharing.

A Church which loses its voice, a Church which does not proclaim the Gospel both to itself and to its neighbours, is no longer the Church of Christ. *“The Church on earth is by her nature missionary,”* Bishop Richard reminded us (quoting the Code of Canon Law). And that's not about somebody else's job description: *“All of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth’,”* says Pope Francis.

Which led Bishop Richard back in his opening presentation to where he started as our bishop – his three priorities of **Mission, Prayer** to support Mission, and **Formation** for Mission; priorities which he set forth at the Amex Stadium back in 2015. We're on a journey – and Bishop Richard will be back in the Deanery at the end of January to see where we've got to with the process of restructuring and redirecting our energies to meet the changing needs of our day (and to do so with a falling number of clergy in the years ahead).

It's a big challenge. But the Lord is calling us, the Lord who entrusts his Word to us and who dwells in our hearts. Let's travel hopefully, because, as you can read in this issue of the *Weybridge Deanery Newsletter*, there's plenty of energy and inspiration around.

Fr. Rob Esdaile (Dean of Weybridge)

Alpha - Is there more to life than this?

You've probably seen banners advertising **'The Alpha Course'** hanging outside churches, or come across posters at bus-stops asking "Is There More to Life Than This?" You might also know that *Alpha* comes from Holy Trinity, Brompton, that big and brash evangelical church near Harrods. So what's it got to do with Catholics?

Quite a lot, actually. Not only has *Alpha* changed over the years, becoming much more sophisticated – to the point of now boasting a whole series of film presentations shot on location around the world (and separate videos for *Youth Alpha*, too), some of which you can find on *YouTube*. It's also become much more widely used by Catholic parishes. Father James Mallon (the author of *Divine Renovation*, a book being used by several parishes across the deanery as a resource) regards *Alpha* as the best tool available at the moment for initial evangelisation; and he has built up his own parish community in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the basis of leading people through *Alpha* courses to increasing involvement in parish ministry and leadership. Around the world, *Alpha* has helped millions of people to renew, deepen and share their faith.

We recently hosted Michael Roche, the national organiser for *Catholic Alpha*, for a meeting with parish teams from across the deanery who are preparing to run *Alpha* Courses. He asked us to remember that *Alpha* is only a **beginning** of proclamation, with a deliberately limited purpose – letting participants ask their own questions and seek answers together. It **isn't** a programme of catechesis, teaching doctrines and dogmas and the 'small print' of Catholic faith to those who've already come to faith.



Michael underlined the importance of **welcome, hospitality** and the **shared meal** to create the setting where such explorations can happen. Leaders and hosts are there to enable people to ask their own questions, not to give all the answers. And he also highlighted the challenge which *Alpha* represents for those of us who already feel at home in the Church: **"Are our parishes ready for the life that will come from Alpha – helping people towards maturity in their faith?"** It's a good question - and an important one as some of our parishes prepare to launch *Alpha* courses in the months ahead. Dare to get involved – and dare to invite outsiders, too; for that is the point.

New Priest for Englefield Green and Egham Hythe

It is great to be in the deanery, having moved a quarter of the way round the M25 from another multi-community parish, of *The Nativity of the Lord* (Redhill, Reigate and Merstham). I have served in many parts of the diocese and seen many changes in my twenty-five years of priesthood. Living alone is a new experience – but so far I am enjoying it!

There is a lot of structural work to buildings required in the Parish of St Cuthbert but we must never take our eyes off what we are really about, working to communicate in loving and tangible ways the good news we profess. I am hoping to see a real commitment to prayer, liturgy, mission and vision as we plan for the future and look forward with confidence and hope to our journey ahead.

Fr Chris Spain



New Priest for Hersham and Molesey

I am delighted to be back in the Weybridge deanery after almost 25 years! I arrived at Christ the Prince of Peace in September 1993 to begin my preparation for the priesthood. And now I'm to be parish priest of Hersham and Molesey! I know the area and the back doubles and many of you very well. I feel truly blessed to be amongst such fine priests and to be supported and welcomed so warmly by the people of our parishes.

I am resident at Molesey Presbytery, so please call by anytime.

Fr Richard Biggerstaff

Around the Deanery



This has been a very positive and exciting year and it is heartening to note the very discernible shifts that are moving us, slowly but more visibly, from Maintenance to Mission. Yes, we still need to look to the future and there is no escaping the fact that the diocese and the wider church will have to address severe shortages of clergy. But for now, the deanery is blessed with a full complement of clergy.

Through the commitment of our parish teams working together with our clergy we can see re-vitalisation in our parish communities and the potential for moving towards a missionary church. It is undeniable that we are living in a rapidly changing and sometimes frankly unstable world. Structures and values we used to take for granted have been called into question, including our Christian ethics and traditional ways of being Church. So it is encouraging to see the creativity at work in our communities, holding together the familiar patterns of parish life and new initiatives, a few of which we detail below.

Parish Ministries

Sacred Heart parish, Cobham hosted a **Day of Reflection for Readers** led by Bishop Richard in September, with almost 100 readers attending. He and the team from DABCEC explained the importance of the ministry in our worship and led participants in exploring *Lectio Divina* – which is a powerful, reflective approach to the Gospel, letting the Word speak not only to our minds but also to our heart and soul. **Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist** have always been expected to attend annual days of prayer as part of their ministry (Indeed there was one at Notre Dame Convent, also in September), but it is good to recognise that the Ministry of the Word is of equal importance.



Reaching Out - Mission

Many parishes are active in welcoming members of the wider community. Christ the Prince of Peace parish, Weybridge is reviewing its **Welcoming Ministry** with some ground-breaking work – supported by Margaret Fraher from the Diocese. Cobham hosted 'The Big Coffee, Tea, & Cake' event in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. SVP Weybridge is providing aid to families in need of physical as well as pastoral care. Some Thames Ditton parishioners are involved in *ElmbridgeCAN* – welcoming refugees from the Syrian conflict.

Formation

Esher and Thames Ditton parishes are both working towards running *Alpha* programmes in 2018, while Weybridge's pilot programme is underway. *Alpha* has already been successfully run in our deanery, in Walton. Cobham is hosting the first two modules of the **Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies** course, co-ordinated by Fr Jonathan How. Thames Ditton has established a **'Mission Team'** which is using James Mallon's book, *Divine Renovation*, to review parish strategies.

Youth

Parishes may sometimes struggle to serve the young adequately, but actually there are lots of initiatives around, over and above sacramental programmes. The diocesan **Lourdes pilgrimage** provides a focus for many. In Weybridge young people put on a summer musical with so much activity and a week of music, dance and drama – and spiritual input. On the second Sunday of each month, the 6pm mass at Weybridge is presented as a **'Youth mass'** – offering a lively, musically up-beat liturgy as the centre-piece between the two parish youth groups for younger and older teens.

Other events

CAFOD has featured greatly in Cobham and Weybridge.

Several parishes have been pro-active in **welcoming new parishioners** – through lunch events and social evenings or functions. Again, **parish databases** are being renewed across the deanery, with more sophisticated software packages to ensure that new parishioners aren't simply 'logged' and forgotten but are communicated with, regularly and appropriately, and that we keep up to date with changes to parishioners' circumstances.

Parish fundraising events have included specific disaster appeals, Parish Charities and our own parishes – there is so much generosity and so much given in our parishes. Thank you to everyone in the Deanery for your support and for all the work that is being done to take us forward.

ST ERCONWALD'S, WALTON-ON-THAMES, 16th NOVEMBER, 7.00PM

Each one of us has lost a loved one in our life, and it takes a long time to grieve properly and fully. On Thursday 16th November at 7.00pm, St Erconwald's Catholic Church will hold an Ecumenical Bereavement Service to help us on our journey of grief. The service will be followed by refreshments in the Parish Hall. Please come if you are grieving the loss of a loved one, and bring along any grieving friends or relatives with you. Invite anyone you know, OF ANY DENOMINATION OR NONE, who grieves in silence, to come for a special time of healing and fellowship.

(Address: 22 Esher Ave, Walton-on-Thames KT12 2TA.
Information: Ann Meehan: ann-meehan@hotmail.co.uk)

Xavier Catholic Education Trust

Six of the eight Catholic state schools in Weybridge Deanery (Salesian Secondary, plus Cardinal Newman, Holy Family, St. Alban's, St. Anne's and St. Charles Borromeo) belong to The Xavier Catholic Education Trust (along with four of the five schools in Woking Deanery). The Trust, formed as a result of the Government Academies programme, has now been running for over a year and its 10 schools have achieved great successes:

The schools in Xavier have all signed up to 'Striving For Excellence' and work together to share best practice: e.g. staff engage in joint training and share expertise across schools. A recent initiative was focused on Maths teaching. Staff have also visited centres of excellence to learn from the very best.

Since inception, the Trust's schools have worked towards creating central support services. Headteachers and governors were asked what they believe should be organised centrally. Feedback this year indicated that too much time is spent writing and reviewing policies for individual schools; so this work is now centralised.

An estates manager ensures schools' accommodation is first class. A number of projects were completed over the summer to improve facilities.

The Trust has very strong relationships with the diocese. Part of its mission is securing the future of its Catholic family of schools and growing Catholic leaders of the future. This year they ran a course for aspiring Catholic Headteachers, which was well received.

A fuller article by Ani Magill, CEO of Xavier Catholic Education Trust, can be found on the Deanery website.



Weybridge Deanery Care Group

Who we are

Weybridge Deanery Care Group started 35 years ago as a gathering of families blessed with children with special needs. Since then it has become an inspirational, happy and caring community, gathering not just those families but also their friends for a very simple and very joyful liturgy and for a party. Our members (some older, some younger, some household and some who need a little extra support so that they can come to our events to join in our very social activities) love being part of this special group. It is completely non-denominational: all are welcome and word of mouth has been powerful in bringing others to us.

What we do

We welcome! Each month, one of the parishes will host our monthly Sunday afternoon gatherings. Parishes take turns throughout the year. We start at 3.00pm with a celebration of Mass with lots of music and then we have a lively and delicious tea together in the parish hall. So that all possible barriers to attending are removed, we will provide lifts for those without transportation and allocate specific drivers to individuals. The intention, for these very happy occasions, is to provide a warm welcome in informal surroundings.

Contact

If you would like to join our activities, or know of someone who would enjoy them, please let me know. We particularly want to reach out to people living on their own. You can speak to me, Celia Hansford, on 01932 840450.

Celia has been a co-ordinator for the group since 2000.

