



Parish Magazine of
the Sacred Heart & St
Margaret Mary

The Shack

Autumn Edition
September 2022

... from humble beginnings

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The Shepherd's Corner

Welcome to the first issue of our Parish Magazine. This will serve not only as our printed memory which tracks what's being done in the Parish but also to be our window to see where we are heading in the grand scheme of things, in Christ.

We are aware of the talents and skills we have in the community and it is but high time to pool these together so that we can create something concrete and especial that will speak to us in relational way. It is called the Shack, for us to realize that, through time we have come a long way as a Parish formed by the Word of God and continually strengthened by the breaking of Bread.

With hope, let us continue to be the little beating hearts of Christ in the community which give life to others in need.

A Look Back at this Year

In February, the Government further relaxed the Covid-19 restrictions and life at church began to really come to life again. But we suffered the shock in early February with Fr. Brendan suffering a stroke. Fortunately, he has been making a good recovery and is currently residing at Montana

House at Great Barton, near Bury St. Edmunds. He welcomes visits. Telephone 01284 787321 to arrange a visit.

We were fortunate that Mass was able to be celebrated for us during the month after Fr. Brendan was taken ill and our thanks go to Bishop Alan, Fr. Michael Stack, Fr. John Ablewhite, Canon Mark Hackeson and Fr. Denis Gallagher for looking after us during that time.

Fr. Jay joined us in early March as Parish Administrator and was subsequently appointed Priest in Charge at the end of July. Fr. Jay has brought a youthful vigour to the Parish and it has been good after the two years of pandemic shutdowns to see the parish getting really active again.

Innovations have been the introduction of the youth chess and table tennis groups and the scripture study group. Recently, Fr Jay also introduced the opportunity to play tennis on Saturdays at the Dereham Leisure Park.

More established parish activities started-up again with the First Holy Communion Classes and Altar Servers meetings. The former knitting circle

reformed as a monthly afternoon tea social, open to all (second Monday), and the SVP also restarted its monthly coffee mornings (first Wednesday). The UCM also began to meet again.

The Alive in Faith project to refurbish the church toilet was successfully completed in the early Summer, after being held up for two years by the pandemic. And with the earlier refurbishment of the kitchen area, these projects have made a real difference to the church facilities. The installation of storage cupboards has also tidied up the area at the back of church.

All in all, after the setbacks of the pandemic, this year has seen the parish begin to blossom once again.

We are thankful to have Fr. Jay with us and continue to keep Fr. Brendan in our prayers for his return to full health and well-being.

From Humble Beginnings ... (from the parish archives)



The building of the first parish church was completed and opened in 1925. It was a small, simple wooden building.

Before then, Mass had been celebrated by Fr. Gray in a private house and later in the club room of The Bull. During the Great War, the club room was taken over by the Military and after some years, Fr. Gray was able to make use of a small room in the Postmasters House, which was made into an Oratory. Also at this time, Fr. Gray arranged each Christmas for a horse and wagon holding ten persons to travel to Fakenham for Christmas Day Mass.

It was not until 1925, however, that the first official church for Roman Catholics in Dereham was opened. The first building was a temporary wooden structure provided by the Guild of Ransom upon a piece of land previously known for many years as the Children's Recreation Ground (the present site of our church) and purchased by Fr. Gray. The timber church was consecrated on 21st July 1925.

As the parish grew, the little timber church gradually became inadequate for the increasing congregation. The building deteriorated during the war years and by 1949 the church's poor condition meant that it had ceased to be used except for Holy Days and, instead, the Dereham

Assembly Rooms were used for Sunday Mass. The timber church was finally given up in October 1950, when work was begun on erecting a new church. The new building, designed by Mr. Donovan Purcell, was completed at a cost of £5,000 in September 1951 and was opened by the then Bishop of Northampton, the Rt. Rev. Mgr. Leo Parker, on 23rd September 1951.



The church was intended to hold about 150 people and was especially designed to permit enlargement at a future date.

In 1968 a new altar, which remains to this day, designed by Mr. Conal O'Donnell,

replaced the former altar. The church organ was also purchased at about the same time from donations by parishioners.

The church was extended in 1984 by the addition of the entrance lobby, additional seating space (in what we now call the Emmaus Room), kitchen and sacristy.

The new church was finally consecrated in 1986 by Bishop Alan Clark and the new church house (presbytery) which had been built in 1976, was also blessed.

You can find out more about the history of the church from the archives tab on the parish website.

Looking Ahead

The next open Parish Meeting is to be held on Wednesday, 5th October at 1630 in the Emmaus Room. The agenda for the meeting will include the charting of the Parish major activities for next year and updates on the Alive in Faith projects.

Our Parish Christmas Party is booked for 11th December at Scarning Village Hall, 1300-1800. It will be a 'bring and share'.

First Communion & Confirmation classes are about to begin for candidates to receive the Sacraments in 2023.

Next Issue The next issue of the magazine will be published on 10/11 December. We welcome interesting and original material for the forthcoming edition. The deadline for the next edition is 7th November.

Editors: Fr. Jay Magpuyo & Elaine Wilkes
Email: edsacredheart@gmail.com
www.sacredheartdereham.org.uk