

## **St James's Church - a thriving and successful parish!**

St James is a flourishing parish – we have an expanding congregation, more groups and meetings, great support for our local Catholic schools, care for our sick and elderly and a real sense of community. We have all benefitted from this and hope St James's has helped you, your family and friends in your spiritual growth. But, this has put additional demands on the facilities at the church.

### **What is the proposed Building Project?**

For several years now we have been looking into how we can accommodate our ever growing congregation and community, enhancing the facilities available to parishioners. In 2008, planning permission was granted for a building project on the site beside our church. This would incorporate a new porch, a children's chapel and a new parish centre.

### **Why do we need this project?**

Church attendance and parish activity is expanding and we are bursting at the seams! Around 550 people attend weekly mass and it is thought there are up to 900 families in our parish. In the early noughties, mass attendance averaged just over 400. Young Catholic families are drawn to the area for its good transport connections, the beautiful parks and riverside, the relatively safe environment and the excellent schools. In 2009, 66 babies were baptised in our parish compared to 48 in 2004.

### **What about the Church Hall? Is that not worth a lot of money?**

The initial proposal to sell the Parish Hall with planning permission was not an option. Improvements to the hall will prove most costly than the building project. The Parish Hall will continue to exist in its current state but there is now a crying need to offer enhanced on-site facilities to improve our parish life.

### **What will the Building Project give to me?**

The **Children's Chapel** will increase the capacity of the church, meaning young children and their families can freely enjoy mass – no more standing out in the rain!

The **Parish Centre** will be used for meetings, coffee mornings, parish activities and social groups as well as post mass celebrations. It will be a suitable venue for birthday parties and other family events.

The **new porch** will offer a link to the Presbytery as well as a welcoming information point for parishioners and visitors.

### **How will the project be financed?**

The financing of the project will be the responsibility of the whole parish. The initial proposal to sell the Church Hall would have paid for much of the building work but as this is not an option we have asked for a loan of **XXX** from the Diocese of Westminster. The diocese need to see a pledge of at least **£200,000** from the parish by next year. We have set up a new bank account for the Building Fund so that it can be kept separate from our other incomes.

### **Why can't it be financed out of the regular Sunday offerings?**

Currently, the parish collects approximately £1500 per week, including retiring collections (for other causes and charities). This works out at under £3 per head. Unfortunately, it is hardly enough money to keep up the maintenance and activities of the existing church and hall. The diocese have also stipulated that we should keep fundraising for loan repayment separate from our regular income.

### **How much I am expected to contribute?**

We do have some funds set aside to start the project but we estimate that if the average family could contribute £3.85 per week we will hit our target. Remember also that the Parish, as a registered charity, can claim 28p for every £1 given from UK taxpayers. Everybody's circumstances are different and all amounts will make a huge contribution to the fund. It may suit you to make a one-off payment or perhaps a smaller monthly amount over several years would fit your circumstances. Maybe you could organise an event or activity in order to make your contribution.

### **How else can I help with the project?**

Of course it is not all about the money! This is a fantastic opportunity for the parish to come together and grow. We will need an army of volunteers over the next 5 years. We need people to help with the fundraising committee, events will need organising and there is plenty of admin work that needs doing. Perhaps you have a skill you can contribute, whether it's balancing the books, cycling to Paris and back, organising a children's party or helping drum up support.

### **How can I find out more?**

**We will be holding a Parish presentation on the 21<sup>st</sup> April at 8 pm** where you can come along and find out more about the whole project including how to make your donation.

If you cannot make the presentations please come along for coffee after mass on **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April** to find out more.

We would also like to set up a Project Website to keep you updated (any volunteers to help with this?)

There is a copy of the building plans displayed in the porch.

### **And when will all this start?**

Now! The work is about to start on the building and the fund is up and running. The upcoming celebrations of our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the visit of Archbishop Nicholls in July are a fantastic opportunity for the community to come together and pledge our support for the future development of our parish.

PLEASE CONSIDER CONTRIBUTING TO THIS EXCITING  
AND WORTHWHILE PROJECT  
- THE FUTURE OF OUR PARISH DEPENDS ON IT