



Saffron Walden
Our Lady of Compassion

Response to the Stewards of the Gospel Parish Questionnaire

Executive Summary

Saffron Walden is a Catholic Parish consisting of one church: Our Lady of Compassion, in Saffron Walden itself. The church has a growing congregation, whose attendance averages 350 at the weekend. Of these around 90 people hold a further voluntary role within the church: minister, server, reader, welcomers and a variety of other jobs. A smaller number of people hold several voluntary roles. The church has an active PPC, finance committee, SVP and many other supporting activities.

The church holds three weekend Masses in addition to the daily Mass. The daily Mass is sometimes held at the Catholic Primary School, St Thomas More, with whom the church has very close links. There is no Catholic secondary school in the Parish, indeed the two closest are not even within the Diocese. The Primary School has a high percentage of Catholic pupils at around 80%, and a growing number of Catholic teachers at 43%

The church has a generous offertory which, whilst smaller than in past years, is still more than enough to meet its costs. The church and presbytery are older buildings, and can be costly to maintain, but are well looked after and in a good state of repair. The church hall is well used, but has many age and construction related issues and needs a re-build. The church is too small for larger services such as Christmas, Easter and First Communion and school services. Sometimes it is possible to use the Anglican Church for large services. The church is close to full for two of the weekend services, and over-full for the main 10:30 service.

The church has a very active First Communion and Confirmation programme. The First Communion Programme is closely linked to St Thomas More Primary School, where most of the year 3 class make their First Communion each year. There are a variety of social events, which are very well attended.

The church is some distance from the nearest Catholic Church - over 12km to the tiny Thaxted church, and 15km from the next closest in the Diocese at Stansted. The church community has strong links to the other Christian communities in the town. There are a number of ecumenical events, which are always attended by the Catholics. There are particularly strong links with the Anglican, Baptist and URC communities.

The community is happy with the Mass and sermons, but would like to have a wider range of spiritual activity, such as prayer services and meetings and more teaching on the Catholic faith. There is a feeling that the people could arrange some of these activities for themselves rather than ask more of the Priest. The church community would like to improve on information sharing, particularly on administrative matters. The people would be keen to attract more people to become part of the community by organising activities to bring people in and welcome them. The community is particularly keen to run activities to involve the youth and young people.

04 April 2017, Ken Lowe, Steward of the Gospel, Saffron Walden