

'Alive in Faith' Newsletter

November 2024

The AiF Supervisory Committee has produced this newsletter updating you on progress since our letter in May this year. I hope that you will find this informative and encouraging, as The AiF Stewardship Committee do. As before each part of this letter is written by members of the committee who have had a special interest in that area, and we are also enclosing a letter from a beneficiary.

It has been nine years since the first donations were made in the six parishes that began a five-year cycle of pledges and the last parish completed its cycle in January of this year. During this time parishioners throughout the diocese have raised over **£5.3 million** to finance vital projects enabling us to deliver our mission of providing Catholic worship throughout East Anglia. Some donors have kindly continued their pledges, so the total continues to grow, we received just over £100,000 this year so far.

Each parish had its own fundraising target, and once this was achieved most of the funds were returned to the parishes for their own projects. This has amounted to **£2.5 million**, most of which has been drawn down for the sort of projects that you can read about below. About £400k of these funds are still to be spent. At the heart of the diocesan project was the life blood of our Faith; the priests of the diocese. While priests are in ministry within a parish, their financial needs are met by that parish, but the diocese is responsible for paying for our priests in retirement and in formation, and that is where the bulk of the diocesan share of the money raised has gone.

£1.1 million for Retired Priests.

Over the nine years of the project thirteen priests have retired from active ministry and during the next ten years thirteen further priests will reach the retirement age of 75. Your generosity has allowed us to purchase or refurbish four retirement properties, as well as to fund, the post of Clergy Welfare Officer. **£1.1 million** has been spent, and this fund will be fully used up this year.



£1.2 million for Seminarians Father Pat Cleary writes:

As the Alive in Faith programmes reaches its final stretch it is a good time to reflect on the wonderful generosity of those who took part.

Having been the diocesan vocations director during the time AIF occurred, I am particularly aware of and grateful for the amounts donated towards the seminary training of our future priests.

We have several priests whose whole priestly preparation was paid for by donations to AIF. In fact, Bishop Alan Hopes was keen at the outset that funds should be set apart for this purpose.

It costs over £30,000 a year to train our priests. It's a high price but with small classes and seminary buildings to maintain, the cost is high.

The diocese has just about used up the funds set aside for seminary training, we have four in seminaries as I write, and so is challenged to find new ways of funding our present and future priests.

So may I, as I pass the Vocation Director baton to our new VD, Fr Christopher Smith, thank you for your generosity the fruits of which will be evident in the year to come as the priests you helped to train continue their priestly ministry in the diocese.



£500k for Social Outreach/Corporal Works of Mercy Dr Claire Daunton writes:

We have been privileged as members of the Alive in Faith stewardship committee to learn of many excellent projects of social outreach across the diocese and to be able to recommend funding for many of them. Although funding has been directed to a number of different types of projects, there has been a focus on the marginalised in our society and particularly the homeless and women in distress. The SVP continues to receive support for its tireless work with the homeless. Its professionalism and dedication ensure that money received from Alive in Faith will be used for the best outcome. Alive in Faith has also

continued to support projects aimed at helping women in danger of exploitation and or of domestic abuse and rape. We know from news bulletins and news reports that domestic abuse, distress and exploitation have become much more common and that resources to help those suffering are very stretched. The help that Alive in Faith funds can provide has been much welcomed. An Alive in Faith outreach project included support for *Talitha Koum*, an Ipswich based charity providing support for vulnerable women. We enclose a letter from them thanking our Diocese for its support and explaining how the money has been spent. Similarly, the focus on the homeless deals with a very real and pressing problem and we can see what a difference Alive in Faith funding can make. Perhaps it is indeed true to say that this social outreach is another demonstration of our diocese's being alive in faith.

Dear Rev Hurst,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 15th October 2024.

Firstly, thank you again so much for the grant of £10,000 that you gifted to Talitha Koum – The Hope Centre in August 2022. It was a very generous sum of money which has benefited our residents in several ways.

Due to the generous donation, we were able to set up weekly activities for our residents to teach them life skills, which will help them to lead independent lives again in the future. These activities have included budgeting workshops, cookery workshops, gardening projects and learning how to grow vegetables for a sustainable future, art workshops and events out in the community. These activities not only increase their confidence in their abilities, they also teach them socialisation skills amongst themselves as well as when they are out in the community.

We also demolished the old barn in January 2023, which cost £9,000 so part of your donation went towards this project too. We are currently planning the next phase of our project, which is to build 5 additional rooms, increase the communal areas for the residents and provide the staff with additional office space. The demand for our work has grown extensively and we are constantly full, which means there are several ladies outside in the community that are waiting to receive our help and support. This saddens us that we are not able to help them immediately, but without any additional rooms we are not able to.

The current drawings for the new expansion are with the architect at the moment and once they have been finalised, they will be submitted to the planning authorities for approval. Of course our biggest challenge is to raise the funds required to complete the project, in order to extend our valuable work. We are also currently raising funds to purchase a suitable vehicle that will provide us unlimited access to the Hope Centre, as Wash Lane floods dreadfully during the winter, making access impossible for a normal car. We are hoping to be blessed with a second hand, high sided vehicle which will enable staff to access the centre, no matter what Mother Nature throws at us! Last winter the lane flooded 17 times in the space of 12 weeks, which resulted in our residents being unsupported on the days that we were not able to access the lane.

Our residents have made great progress this year, and four residents have been able to move on successfully into independent living – thanks to the projects that we were able to implement. Of course, the rooms were immediately filled by new ladies needing our help.

We continue to work very closely with our residents and love working with them and seeing the progress that they are making. None of this would be possible without the donations that we receive and the blessings and prayers that we receive. We are truly in awe of how God provides for us.

Thank you so much for your support.

Blessings to you all.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,



Tina Prince
Hope Centre Service Manager

£2.4 million for Parish Projects Peter Ledger writes:

Since the last newsletter parish projects continue to demonstrate the success of the Alive in Faith initiative across the entire diocese. Despite the programme approaching its natural conclusion Alive in Faith projects continue to be started while others come to fruition.

In some parishes the availability of Alive in Faith funds has made possible improvements that otherwise would have been unachievable in many circumstances. East Dereham parish, for example, was faced by a substantial capital project when the church heating system was condemned at the end of 2023. In normal circumstances the cost involved would have been beyond the means of the parish. Alive in Faith funds raised by generous parishioners meant that work could proceed. Better still, the parish was able to take advantage of the inevitable disruption and replace the floor and redecorate.

Other parishes have been enabled to embark on improvements. Pope Francis is a strong advocate of renewable energy and climate action. Swaffham has embraced the initiative by installing 20 PV Solar Panels on the roof of the church nave. The panels provide a sustainable source of energy for the church, Presbytery and Parish Rooms. The project should result in a significant reduction in energy costs together with a small income from exporting power to the grid. Alive in Faith funds contributed significantly to the cost of this important project.

The Grade II listed church of St Felix, Felixstowe is embellished by beautiful stained-glass windows, including four by Tom Denny, one of the finest contemporary stained-glass artists. The remaining windows are by Hardman & Co and form the largest collection of their windows in Suffolk. In situ for 110 years the wonderful east window depicting the rosary needed renovation. The cost of this essential work was made possible by Alive in Faith funds.

Summary and Conclusion

Now that the cycles of giving are complete in every parish, we have scaled down our administration. Thank you for your generosity, but if you would like to continue to support AiF, unless you still have a Standing Order set up, we can only accept lump sums from now on. I would like to thank Lorna Young who has administered this huge project so well since its inception, and continues to do so. Please do contact me, if you have any questions.

Deacon James Hurst

AiF Chair