

**PARISH PROFILE**  
**SACRED HEART OF JESUS, NORTH GOSFORTH**

The church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Sacred Heart) was formally opened and dedicated on 24th June 1912. The church itself was built in the mid 1860's and for the next forty years or so was part of Gosforth Park, then a country estate on the northern most edge of the rapidly expanding city of Newcastle. It was built privately by the estate owners, the Smiths, who retained it when the rest of the property was sold to form Gosforth Race course in the 1880's.

The church was originally a private chapel known as St Mary's and from 1865 to 1911 it had a number of Anglican incumbents paid by the estate owners, although it was never dedicated as an Anglican Church. By the early 20th century it had fallen into disuse and it was bought by Bishop Collins, (for £3000) with his own money, to meet the needs of the catholic population of Wideopen, Hazlerigg, Brunswick, Dinnington, North Gosforth and Seaton Burn, all mining village communities.

For the first 14 years the church was served from St Aidan's in Long Benton and, from 1925, from St Charles' in Gosforth. Eventually, with the expansion of urban Newcastle into estates in the south of the parish, and the consequent increase in population, the parish was given its own priest. A Church hall was built in 1999.

In the second half of the 20th Century the demographic make up the parish began to change with the decline of mining as a major source of income and with the growth of residential estates between the old villages, consisting of an increasingly middle class and prosperous population. The parish is still growing: within the past 5 years a major new estate has been built within the parish boundaries. This has attracted young families, single people and older, retired people. It is anticipated that this development will have a significant impact on the parish. The parish has a very small ethnic population at present but this, too, is changing. The average Sunday Mass attendance is 350.

There are several other Christian communities within the parish boundaries and relations with them are excellent at all levels. During Lent each community hosts an ecumenical lunch where the common aspects of our Christian beliefs are celebrated.

Sacred Heart Primary School was opened in 1973 and was closed in 1995. The Sacred Heart is now served by St Oswald's Junior School, and although it is located in St Charles' parish, most of the pupils are from the Sacred Heart. The school has 210 pupils on the roll and the number of pupils on the register of Special educational needs is below average (as is the number of pupils receiving free school meals).

**Liturgy**

The centrepiece of our parish liturgy is the celebration of Mass - a vigil mass on Saturday evening, and two masses on Sunday. There is a regular weekday Mass and the parish is grateful that Father Joe is supported by Father John O'Gorman who is resident in the parish in his retirement.

Our Eucharistic celebration is vibrant and well attended. Sunday morning mass is very much a family affair, supported by a lively music group. Once a month, for our Family Mass we have a special children's liturgy prepared by a team within the parish, with active participation by a wide age range of children.

Music is also very much part of our Sunday evening Mass. All our weekly Masses are served by a large group of active participants; a team of trained readers, Eucharistic ministers, collectors and counters. A talented team of flower arrangers help to prepare the church for Sunday mass and special occasions.

Easter and Christmas liturgies are prepared by a parish liturgical team and combine the talents of our music groups and people of all ages. We prepare for major feasts with services of reconciliation supported by deanery priests.

Sacred Heart Church is a prayerful refuge throughout the week. A daily mass with small regular attendance, daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a prayer group which meets every Wednesday and a scripture study group all combine liturgy and witness. A fortnightly study group works through a programme of Bible study.

Preparation for the sacraments involve different groups of catechists. Currently Father Joe prepares parents for the Baptism of their child, and a Baptism Group is in the planning stages.

The children are prepared for the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation by a teacher from St. Oswald's outside of school hours and includes children who attend other schools. Confirmation preparation is provided by a team of parishioners and RCIA courses take place with their support. Marriage preparation is organised by Father Joe and supported by Marriage Care.

### **Witness**

Liturgy without witness would be incomplete and our liturgy spills out into a wide range of activities in the parish, and far beyond. Taking the Word of God to others inspires us to be involved with other local churches, and Sacred Heart parish is involved in a range of ecumenical activities such as Lent lunches.

An inclusive liturgy brings people into our community and our family masses, by involving our children, bring parents and grandparents into church. Our Parish is growing. Newcastle Great Park, a new large development within our parish boundaries, is bringing a large number of new families to the parish. A welcoming group has been formed to ensure that all families are visited and welcomed as they move in. This programme will need to be ongoing as new areas of the estate are developed.

We are aware that we act as witness to the Word of God by our actions in the world. We consider ourselves to be members of a global family, and as a relatively affluent community have a responsibility to our brothers and sisters affected by poverty and war.

Our active Justice and Peace Group help to raise awareness about global issues, and the parish supports a wide range of fundraising activities.

Our annual clean water campaign heightens awareness and sends money to CAFOD for water filters. A parish lottery provides a regular income for the Kenya Acorn Project, a local based charity which provides water tanks and latrines for schools and a hospital in Kenya. An organisation called MASH (Medical Aid Sacred Heart) set up in the parish about 15 years ago is now active across North Tyneside and has raised money for a range of war-torn communities, including Rumania, Baghdad and most recently, Palestine.

As a parish we also welcome and support a number of annual appeals such as Sharing Fair and Survive-Miva.

There is an active website, which is regularly updated giving details of church services and other parish activities [www.sacredheartng.org.uk](http://www.sacredheartng.org.uk).

### **Service**

And just as liturgy becomes witness, our witness involves Service.

Our parish community is not just comprised of the people who regularly attend mass or who can come to our social activities. A group of parish visitors make sure that elderly and housebound parishioners are visited regularly, those who wish receiving the Eucharist weekly, and Father Joe visiting every six weeks or so. This work is greatly supported by our Parish sister, Sr Baptist and the SVP group.

As a parish we appreciate that our young people are our most important asset, our future. Together with St Charles', Gosforth and Holy Name, Jesmond, we employ a full time youth worker to support young people in their liturgy, and to encourage them in their witness and service. An active youth club operates for the three parishes at St Charles'.

The SVP group actively supports those in need in the parish. Twice a year there is a special mass for the sick, and individual parishioners are actively involved in a range of organisations on Tyneside offering support for the homeless and asylum seekers.

We participate in the monthly food collection, and our annual Christmas Toy Appeal provides toys to be distributed to the neediest children on Tyneside through refuges and social workers.

And like any good family, we have fun together. Our parish hall supports a wide number of groups enjoying a wide range of social activities. From coffee and biscuits after mass every Sunday morning, when we get the opportunity to chat and welcome newcomers, to our mothers and toddlers groups during the week, and to our carpet bowls on a Friday night, there's something for everybody.

POSH (Players of Sacred Heart) has been going strong for ten years, with their annual pantomime giving pleasure to the participants, (all ages, all abilities, all welcome) and its audiences. It has been acclaimed as one of the highlights of the art scene on Tyneside (Oh, no it hasn't!).

The Ascent Group meets regularly offering support for retired people. Other activities on offer in the church hall include line dancing, a papercraft club and an art class.

Our social committee offer culture in the form of occasional classical music and poetry as well as family fun evenings. But more important than the content of our social evenings is the ethos behind them, that we are a family and that we should care for and support each other, that our parish hall is a welcoming place and our church a place of love.

**Areas of strength.**

- We have a very enthusiastic parish community with a very active liturgical and social life.
- We are an inclusive parish, and parish tasks are shared broadly, offering all the opportunity to participate fully in parish life.
- We are a welcoming parish.

**Areas for development.**

- We need to develop a culture of Youth Work, take a greater responsibility for the evangelisation of our young people, and explore ways of encouraging young people to take an active part in Justice and Peace activities
- We need to develop a deeper spirituality and to develop our prayer life. A programme has been initiated and will be developed by days of reflection and a deeper understanding of scripture.
- We need to encourage the participation of lay parishioners in the Sacramental preparation programmes.
- We need to work more closely with other churches in evangelising the area.