

In attendance: Archbishop Eamon Martin, Esther Druse, Lucia Dougan, Ann Donnelly, Anne Marie McGuinness, Phil Powell, Marianne Haffey, Anne Clarke, Marie Gribben, Geraldine Toal, Marguerite Kelly, Carol Gormley, Sheila Hughes, Fr Oliver Brennan (Stonebridge), Mary Vallely and Brian Lennon, S.J. (Justice and Peace Commission).

There is still no parish community centre and no update on what is happening re plans for the Parochial Hall. Archbishop Eamon said he would try to get an update from Fr Peter McAnenly (Administrator) and parishioners could be informed through the bulletin.

What concerns the women most are their children and grandchildren. A community centre would keep them off the streets, be a meeting place for people, and also could be used after funerals. Many small towns and parishes have one, so why not Armagh. The Stonebridge centre was seen as a white elephant before being built, but it is used extensively.

There are big drug problems with children as young as 10 years of age who gather at the Callan river afternoons and evenings. A car arrives later in the evening presumably bringing the harder drugs. One of the women spoke of picking up empty bottles (containing some sort of foam residue) from the hedges after one of these evenings. Scary stuff. Police do help a bit but perhaps schools could do more to educate children about drugs. One woman said that despite children seeing films about deaths caused by drugs that after a while the impact wears off and the children forget.

Another area of concern is lonely elderly who are housebound. Perhaps a parish visitation team could help here? Or is this already covered by neighbours and others agencies? Also the problem of isolated elderly who want their privacy, but still need company.

There are of course worries about the influence of social media and how to prevent it taking over our young peoples' lives.

How do we get young people to go to mass and to be engaged? Young children are bored at mass.

Fr Oliver then spoke about the children's liturgy they have in Stonebridge. They have the advantage of having the pastoral centre beside the church of course. He also said that giving a child something to do, some responsible task during mass, increased their interest. Parents will come back to mass if the children are involved.

There was no doubting the passion and commitment of these women in working for their community. One expressed fears about the uncertainty around Brexit and the Troubles starting again. Archbishop Eamon suggested that if the women had any project in mind he might be able to source some funding for it. He would speak to Fr Peter McAnenly about their concerns and was obviously very grateful to have had the opportunity to listen to them.

He has also noted the date of 28/29 June in his diary when the water in the well at St Patrick's Park rises and is used for curative purposes - an old Armagh tradition which the women are resurrecting.