

St Mary's Pastoral Parish Council

Minutes of meeting Thursday 24th October 2013

Present:

Father William Wright (Parish Priest)	Sheila Lund (Interaction)
Simon Knowles (Chairperson)	Chris Matthewman (Finance Committee)
Cathy Binns (Support)	Martin Mayhew
Mick Britton (Liturgy B)	Simon Stockdale (Liturgy A)
Charlotte Burrell (Formation)	Chris Senior (Note Taker)
Amanda Kelly (School)	

Apologies: *None*

1. **Welcome and opening prayer** was led by Fr. William

2. **The minutes of the meeting on 18th July 2013**

Chris Matthewman's prior apologies had been omitted from the previous minutes.

After acknowledging the above correction, the previous minutes were approved.

3. **Matters Arising not covered by the Agenda**

2) **Shrine of Our Lady of the Crag**

Mick Britton noted he had not yet investigated potential for Leeds Diocesan funding support for the Shrine, but had recently received clarification of what was required and would now proceed.

ACTION: Mick Britton to contact Kevin Anderson 'Finance & Property Department: Diocese of Leeds' to explore possible sources of funding or support.

Fr. William commented that the planned meeting of *Churches Together* had been cancelled, but that he would investigate the assistance of other churches with the Shrine at a future meeting. It was noted that other approaches for support could be made to bodies e.g. Knaresborough Town Council (as part of a local tourism attraction) or English Heritage?

The Finance Committee were now assessing the reported costs for the tree works required on site. The insurance situation over the Shrine was now resolved.

6) **Drop in Attendance Figures**

Amanda Kelly raised various School queries for clarification from the last meeting. In response Fr. William explained that (following the resignation of Christine Wray as St Mary's Primary School Head Teacher) he would now approach her successor in c. April 2014 with the proposal of holding Year Group Masses.

4. **Hall Development**

Fr. William introduced the topic, reporting that in addition to immediate, ongoing repairs the Church Hall was also in great need of a major refurbishment to make the space both more attractive for users and fit for purpose. The primary aim of development works would be to serve the Parish, though changes supporting other (income generation) activities could also be considered.

The recently reformed Fabric Committee (chaired by Philip Burnett) alongside its other duties, will help investigate the redevelopment of the Church Hall. Very early exploratory discussions had already taken place, looking at building configurations and desirable facilities. From this first discussion a programme of consultation would take place between Steven Perry (Hall Manager) and regular Parish and external Church Hall users to establish user needs and seek additional ideas.

After further investigation the funding implications for any works will be passed to the Finance Committee for further consideration; with any costs likely to be met through a discrete fund raising campaign.

A discussion followed by PPC members which touched on initial thoughts re. changed orientation of the Hall (move to L shaped space), and potential income generation activities in a refurbished Hall (e.g. a meeting room facility offered in the day to local businesses).

ACTION: ALL to consider potential income generation sources which might be supported in a refurbished Hall.

ACTION: ALL to contact Steven Perry (or Fr. William) with ideas on the Hall refurbishment

5. **Finance Committee Report and Business**

Chris Matthewman tabled 3 reports;

- *Income & Expenditure to 31st August 2013,*
- *Annual Financial Statement (year end 31st August 2013) for Ampleforth Abbey trust*
- *Balance Sheet at 31 August 2013.*

In talking through the accounts CM noted that 'year-to-year' income was slightly down on equivalent period figures for last year, although this was largely affected by the *Gift Aid* figures falling in a different financial year (by a matter of days). In general however the situation was positive, with Parish income reported as greater than expenditure.

The repayment of the original Ampleforth (15 year) Loan for the Church refurbishment works was reportedly on track. Other Parish funds already set aside were for building maintenance works and for essential safety related works to the trees at the Shrine.

Simon Knowles asked about the amounts and changes to the split of Offertory plate v Standing Orders in Parish income. CM noted these figures were still being assessed, though as a result of recent campaigns the number of Standing Order payments had increased.

Martin Mayhew wondered if more could be done to invest spare funds (given the very low income from interest payments shown in the statements). CM noted this could be further investigated, but there was very limited discretion in this area as funds were controlled by the Trust. In addition a proportion of Church funds were already committed, and others monies had to remain readily available, i.e. could not be locked into investment accounts.

Post PPC Meeting Note: Fr. William reports in confirmation of the above that all Trust monies are subject to Trust investment policy, under the Trust's Finance Department.

6. **Falling Mass Attendances**

This continuation of last PPC discussion was again informed by the previously circulated table showing falling patterns in average weekly Mass attendances (from average of 331 participants in 2008-09 reduced to 269 in 2012-13).

Simon Knowles thanked all members for their written responses giving personal reasons to attend church, and also reasons specific to attending St Mary's. These anonymous comments were circulated to all prior to the PPC meeting, and their further use would be considered.

The discussion concentrated mainly on how best to encourage Catholics to return to Church. Major observations (in addition to those discussed previously) were:

- A focussed campaign to lapsed attendees could be usefully held in the 3 weeks before Easter and/or Christmas (prior to peak periods of Church attendance).
- A 'buddy' system or 'bring a friend to Church' scheme could be introduced.
- Parents of School children could be usefully targeted, encouraged and invited to attend; especially if School masses were moved to the Church as proposed
- A publicity campaign would benefit from engaging the imagination of potential participants and e.g. 'Join us on a Church Busting Sunday'
- The Parish Database should be exploited for potential mailshots and contact lists
- A Christmas card (from St Mary's) to lapsed attendees 'Come Back this Christmas' could be sent, to include Mass Times and offer an invitation to reaffirm their faith.
- Could build on Fr. William's recent explanations of changes in the celebration of Mass
- Spiritual growth and Faith needs must also be addressed e.g. hosting religious educational courses similar to 'Alpha Course' 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' etc
- Groups of parishioner could visit individual homes for 'Fellowship Meetings' or 'Bible Study' events, similar to those held for Confirmation Group.
- We could also consider hosting a Parish Retreat at St Mary's.
- Attempt setting up links to (St Mary's Parish) children who attend St John Fisher Catholic High School. Possibility of Fr. William addressing ex St. Mary's pupils and to include St. John Fisher on mail-outs?
- Questioned which Mass has lost the most attendees; perhaps Mass Times could be investigated to see if they could be changed to be more convenient to attendees.

It was agreed that further work was required, especially on the scope and methodology of any campaign. As a result Lent 2014 was the earliest most likely date to launch a new initiative to attract lapsed attendees (prior to larger attendances at Easter).

ACTION: Fr. William asked ALL to consider any practices at St Mary's which might actually alienate visitors and returning parishioners.

7. Welcome to St Mary's

a) Welcome Pack

Sheila Lund invited initial comments on a Welcome Pack/Booklet she had drafted (though not yet circulated) which was intended for visitors or new members of the Parish.

Main sections of the draft booklet included:

- General Introduction and History of St Mary's,
- Mass Times,
- Order of Mass,
- Young Children and Babies / Children's Liturgy,
- Baptisms, Weddings & Funerals,
- Getting involved in the Church,
- Contact details,
- Social events,
- Donations, Gift Aid, 200 Club etc.

It was hoped the final booklet would be in loose-bound format (to allow easier, cheaper changes to just pages of specific factual information).

Early comments from the PPC members included:

- A general appreciation that this was an excellent idea and that good progress had been made.
- An e-version of the final booklet could be placed on the Parish Website.
- It was felt Nametags could be usefully worn by Greeters.
- A new ministry of Welcomers could be used to look out and assist all new attendees; this role was seen as additional to the current Greeters (though they could best assist Welcomers in identifying new people for more focussed assistance).

ACTION: Sheila Lund to consider people who might be asked to become Welcomers

b) Open Door

Fr. William consulted the council for their views about the proposal to start leaving the Bond End Church doors open during the day for the benefit of parishioners, visitors and passers-by.

PPC members noted:

- Security of the building and contents, vandalism and ensuring the safety of the Parish Priest, had prompted previous closures.
- Impact of the practice of open doors on Insurance validity was unknown.
- For addressing security and damage issues it was felt better to leave the Church Lane 'garden' entrance open rather than the Bond End entrance.
- Wondered if the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (with attending parishioner rota) could be used as basis for longer hours of supervised opening of the church.

8. **Bond End Facade**

Fr. William noted that the appearance of the Bond End façade of St Mary's was not especially inviting or attractive. He noted in particular that the design of the external Crucifix belonged to the daunting medieval tradition of 'Christ in Agony' as opposed to more common modern portrayal of Christ after death.

It was known that the current crucifix had a long-standing, although unknown history at St Mary's which should be explored; but the PPC unanimously agreed that the existing crucifix could be helpfully relocated and replaced.

ACTION: Cathy Binns to investigate the history of the existing Bond End Crucifix.

9. **PPC New Constitution**

Following discussions at the previous meeting, the newly amended version of the *Constitution of the Pastoral Parish Council* was unanimously approved by the PPC.

10. **Progression of Youth Roles in Mass**

Fr. William explained that he had now introduced a phased progression for the formal involvement of children and young adults in the Mass at St Mary's, outlined as follows:

- Altar Servers Post First Communion
- Acolytes Post Confirmation
- Readers VI Form (Year 12)

The role of children in other roles (e.g. Alms Collectors, or Eucharistic Ministers) was not encouraged as this distracted from the above progressive roles.

It was believed a general explanation of this Youth progression to the School (and to the Parish generally) would be of great value.

11. **Le Grand Depart/Allez Yorkshire**

Chris Matthewman briefed the PPC over the scale and potential opportunities for the forthcoming staging of the *Tour de France* in Yorkshire (and specifically Knaresborough on Sunday 6th June 2014).

In scale, *Le Tour* is the world's largest annual sporting event. On average spectators travel 130km to see a stage spending on average six hours at a time at the roadside. The passing of the entire column, (support and sponsor vehicles, cyclists, and media) taking over 3 hours. In addition a major programme of cultural events, '100 days build up' would be developed and a large practice session held in May. Explanatory leaflets (from <http://letour.yorkshire.com/>) were circulated to PPC members.

Given that the sporting event would pass directly outside St Mary's it was agreed that *Le Tour* presented significant opportunities for Church fundraising (including Church and Cycle-related events prior to the race), and to also spiritually support the many anticipated visitors on the Sunday e.g. additional Mass on the day of the event.

ACTION: ALL to consider how St Mary's could respond to the opportunities provided by the *Tour de France*.

12. **Any Other Business**

a) Toilets in Church Hall

Simon Knowles noted complaints had been received over the lack of toilet paper etc. in the Hall Toilets, and wondered if they would be better kept locked and Hall users directed to the better maintained Church toilets.

Fr. William reported that Steven Perry (Hall Manager) was already pursuing this matter to ensure the Church Hall Toilets were suitably stocked and cleaned.

b) Fees on Parish Website

Cathy Binns noted that the Parish Website's phrasing of 'fees' for Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals could be better expressed to state more clearly that these were 'suggested donations'. Similarly it was felt that the phrasing could also be improved over the use of any income towards the 'building fund'.

ACTION: Fr. William to investigate the re-phrasing of 'donations' on the website

13. **Future Meetings**

1900 – 2030 Thursday 16th January 2014

1900 – 2030 Thursday 10th April 2014

14. **Final prayer**

Fr. William closed the meeting with a prayer.