

## **St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council**

### **Minutes of meeting Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014**

**Present:**

Fr William Wright

*Appointed*

Simon Knowles (Chairperson)

Chris Clissitt

Amanda Kelly

Martin Mayhew

Simon Stockdale

*Elected*

Cathy Binns (Support)

Charlotte Burrell (Formation)

Sheila Lund (Interaction)

Jeff McGillan (Activities)

*Secretary:* Chris Senior (Note Taker)

**Apologies:** None

1. **Welcome and Opening Reading** was led by Fr. William

2. **The minutes of the meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

*Correction* re. item 10. a) 'Parish Shop' .

Simon Knowles clarified that the 'criticisms' were actually suggestions raised by the volunteers staffing the shop (and had not come from parishioners). See item 8.

Subject to the above amendment, the Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record.

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

8) Welcome Mass Revisited

The actioned item (to discuss and learn from practices elsewhere in other Churches) was mistakenly omitted from the formal Agenda but covered under Matters Arising.

Among the main debated points:

- Members admitted to a limited experience of attending other Churches in recent months so could not readily compare differences; these opportunities mostly from trips away from home or holidays. However it was felt that most other parishes offered an approach directly comparable with St Mary's, indeed in some cases the experience elsewhere was considered to be worse, e.g. attendance could be cold or impersonal.
- The physical environment and appearance of some other Churches surpassed the décor and architecture at St Mary's.

- It was suggested that gaining a better understanding of the expectation of our Parishioners attending Church could be useful. In discussion, it was suspected that beyond satisfying spiritual needs, regular attendees valued an environment that was vibrant, welcoming, and provided opportunities for social interaction; but without any 'overt' salesmanship.
- The seating layout in St Mary's Church was often criticised due to the lack of space, and problem with kneelers. It was agreed this was an inescapable outcome of the arc-geometry arrangement of rows, and that most parishioners had been able to cope with the limitations.
- The 'turn around and greet your neighbour' initiative used occasionally by Fr William could be usefully repeated to be more welcoming to all.
- Parishioners could be directly asked for feedback or suggestions in how to improve the experience and attendances at St Mary's; this via combination of bulletin notices, suggestion box, email, website etc.
- It was felt there was no opportunity for the Parish to meet the PPC as a body, and to receive reports or feel included or informed about parish affairs. It was suggested the AGM (which had not run for 2+ years) should be revived as a short forum with an open invitation to all (see also item 4).

**ACTION:** Fr William to draft a bulletin item asking for wider Parish feedback, and to consider other media (website, emails, suggestion box).

#### 9) Care of Car Parks & Bins

Fr. William sought clarification over the 'role of parishioners' in litter collection. It was confirmed that all parishioners should be urged to take the initiative and personally tidy up any litter they discovered e.g. in the car park. It was considered the situation would be improved by the relocation of the bins as part of the ongoing Hall Refurbishment works.

**ACTION:** A bulletin item to be drafted reminding all to pick up, and take away any litter from Church premises; including the car park and approaches.

All other Actionable matters were either completed, or included as Agenda items.

#### 4. Report from Finance Committee

A report from the Finance Committee meeting of Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October was circulated by email just prior to the meeting; this account was not provided in hard copy therefore unfortunately many members had not yet had chance to read or comment on the notes.

The ensuing discussion centred on the value of reviving the AGM to be more inclusive to the Parish; ideally this would be around the end of the financial year and as a result of past experiences should *not* be scheduled to follow directly after Mass.

**ACTION:** Fr William to consider with the Finance Committee the scheduling of a new AGM.

Sheila Lund also reported that the fund raising target (to end of December 2014) was £2,770, with £1,923 of income already taken to date. The next significant social event, (with a secondary fundraising element) was Sunday midday lunch in the Church Hall on 23<sup>rd</sup> November.

5. **Report Back from Sub-Committees (PPC 5.1)**

No report was made.

6. **Assessing Parish Charitable Activities**

Jeff McGillan spoke to a previously circulated (22<sup>nd</sup> October) email sent to all PPC members and further explained the situation and financial balances re. Justice & Peace activities in St Mary's parish. It was also reported that long standing J&P Treasurer (Harry Boucher) was due to stand down at the end of 2014.

In summary, £2,788 of funds were currently in the J&P account. In 2014 two separate £500 donations had been made 'to Africa' re. Fr Francis Tanzania and Fr Nyama Etienne. However St Mary's had received no feedback or acknowledgement from these recipients and due to concerns over financial accountability the decision had been made to suspend future payments pending information and advice from the PPC.

PPC member comments included:

- Full agreement with the suspension of payments pending further information.
- It was agreed to be vital that all funds were fully accountable, both for the sake of donors and of the intended recipients themselves.
- The unspent balance of funds in J&P account must be used to support charitable works in Africa as this was the basis of raising the original donation. However this need not be made to the charities or parishes funded to-date by St Mary's.
- The appeal to St Mary's parishioners was in finding individual parish(es), rather than a general donation to an 'impersonal' institution, and also understanding how the money directly benefitted the recipients. Getting feedback in the actual use of funds was a vital part of encouraging repeated, long-term donations.
- In the current situation, it was believed that it was better to continue to encourage future donations for Africa with the expectation of eventually finding an accountable good cause, this rather than temporarily suspending fund raising (given the confusion and uncertainty this would create, especially when trying to re-launch donations at a later stage).
- It was suggested contact could be made with (J&P member) Evelyn Colman to see if any communication from the above parishes had been made directly with her.
- Direct contact should be made by St Mary's with the above African parishes to confirm receipt of the 2014 donations, and identify what the money was used for.
- Fr William suggested potential alternatives to an individual parish as recipients for these funds were *Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)* or *MedAir*.
- It was suggested that the African (Zimbabwe) links with Ampleforth could also be explored as another avenue for a recipient.

**ACTION:** Jeff McGillan and Kathy Binns to identify and approach J&P members who may be able to offer further advice over contacts in Africa. This to include meeting Evelyn Colman to check for any recent correspondence that she may have received.

**ACTION:** Jeff McGillan to write directly to the African parishes to seek confirmation and any other feedback over the funds St Mary's had donated by bank transfer.

**ACTION:** Further development or feedback from the above actions to be followed up as an Agenda item at the next PPC Meeting.

## 7. Move of Parish Office

For information Fr William reported his intention to use the current 'Church Office' as a consultation and meeting room for his pastoral activities and private consultations.

This change required the move of some administrative tasks (primarily bulletin editing), to the small room adjacent to the Church shop. Technical support in moving the PC had already been sought from Ampleforth, and discussion held with the bulletin editors.

It was suggested that Fr William approach the Finance Committee for funding to assist in the furnishing of the room so it was made more suitable for its new purpose.

**ACTION:** Fr William to contact the Finance Committee and seek support for furnishings and décor in the old Office to facilitate pastoral works.

## 8. Future of Parish Shop

Simon Knowles briefed members with the reassurance that the shop had a future and that there was a perceived need for it within the parish. The key matter was in agreeing how the shop would operate in the future, and how best to promote and market the service. In discussions PPC members noted:

- A temporary shop, sales point or display in the Atrium would raise the profile of the shop to the Parish.
- Improved signage and direct promotion, posters, bulletin notices could assist.
- Increased sales-lines e.g. not just *Fair Trade* goods, but include sweets, children's toys and knick-knacks etc. could encourage visitors and custom.
- Expansion of the range of Christmas and Easter cards; specifically providing in-house (local childrens) designs would engage people and increase income.
- A rota for children to directly assist in staffing the shop could also be helpful.
- There was a problem with expectations; the Church shop was 'expected' to offer cheap or subsidised goods to the Parish, but that it was already in competition with cheaper and better stocked internet outlets.
- A post of 'shop manager' was essential to coordinate work; *De facto* Julie Burrell.
- Consideration should be given to increasing sales period for some items e.g. extending availability of Christmas goods (cribs, cards etc.) long in advance of Advent. Simon Knowles noted this maximised sales, and should appeal to families budgeting their Christmas spending over a longer period. Fr William considered this regrettable as conflicting with the Church calendar for the Feast and that ideally cards should only be on sale from the start of Advent<sup>1</sup>.
- Internet shopping provision could be investigated.

**ACTION:** The Parish Shop discussion should be continued at the next PPC meeting.

---

<sup>1</sup> UPDATE: The Advent embargo was subsequently relaxed after later consideration (post meeting).

## 9. Holy Day Mass Times

Fr William suggested that for all future *Holy Days of Obligation* not falling on a Sunday, that evening Mass times should be changed to 7.00 pm (compared to current practice of these services for 7:30 pm). This would realign these Masses with all other normal weekly evening services which were held at 7:00pm.

Members understood that the current practice of later times had been intended to assist greater midweek attendances by working families; but thought that bringing forward the time as proposed would not create major problems for most parishioners.

Cathy Binns also noted that the external Church noticeboards urgently needed attention and updating to display the true times of Mass services etc.

The PPC supported the recommendation to change the Mass times as outlined above.

## 10. Any Other Business

### a) Car Parking

Fr William and Simon Knowles gave details of a scheme to be launched with nearby residents to attempt a better control (and gain revenue) from the Church parking spaces. This specifically for areas adjacent to the Hall Kitchen and the rear of the Hall i.e. not the main parking area adjacent to the garden.

Residents would be asked to display a 'parking disc' in their vehicle, which gave them the right to park in the above areas; though this would not guarantee a reserved parking space. The disc would be free until December 2014, but thereafter a £200 annual fee would be levied for the disc; it was noted St John's charge £550 p.a. for a similar scheme though this provided a reserved parking space in their much larger car park.

The scheme would be formalised by the use of formal contracts, which would address any liability issues; and all funds raised (i.e. 7 residents had so far registered for the scheme) would be directed to the Building Fund. Simon Knowles reported that copies of the formal terms of agreement were available to all on request.

A brief discussion followed which further explored some of the above issues. It was noted the past difficulties of enforcing and maintaining good relationships with neighbours over parking disputes (chaining spaces etc. had been tried previously and proved difficult to manage). The issue of liability and legal action e.g. for damage caused while parked on Church premises, was also raised; though this should be covered by the terms of the carefully worded contract.

**ACTION:** Simon Knowles to contact Jo Brennand to check the legal implications (if any) of the car park permit scheme.

**11. End of Term Thanks**

On behalf of all the wider Parish, Fr William formally expressed his gratitude for the extremely valuable contributions of all those members of the Parish Pastoral Council who had now reached the end of their 'terms of office', namely:

Elected Members:

Cathy Binns (Support)  
Jeff McGillan (Activities)

Appointed Members:

Amanda Kelly  
Martin Mayhew  
Simon Stockdale

This appreciation was fully echoed and endorsed by all other PPC members.

**12. Future Meetings**

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2015

**13. Final prayer**

Fr. William closed the meeting with a prayer.